Dictionary of

Louisiana French

As Spoken in Cajun, Creole, and American Indian Communities

University Press of Mississippi / Jackson
Preface

The Dictionary of Louisiana French: As Spoken in Cajun, Creole, and American Indian Communities is the capstone of a long-term collaborative project whose objective has been to document all French-related varieties in Louisiana. The salient features of this project are its collaborative nature and the inclusion of outreach components. It has served as a catal-yst in establishing communication among scholars working on French-related speech varieties in Louisiana. These efforts have already yielded significant results. In addition to the Dictionary of Louisiana Creole, the first major inventory of the vocabulary for that language, they have led to the publication of a state-of-the-art collective volume, French and Creole in Louisiana, and have facilitated, on the part of Louisiana-based scholars, a more robust contribution to published overviews of all varieties of North American French, such as Le français en Amérique du Nord: État présent. The outreach objectives of the project were partially fulfilled by the preparation and dis-tribution of a CD-ROM, Discovering Cajun French through the spoken word /A la découverte du français cadien à travers la parole. This product made it possible to disseminate part of the results of the research to a very broad public, including the francophone Louisianans who had served as consultants during the fieldwork. This very complex and sophisticated CD-ROM not only provides 150 pages of representative texts accompanied by oral samples, but it incorporates lexical search software that provides access to a 3,000 word lexicon. It also contains a concordance for that lexicon and makes it possible for the user to locate each occurrence of the individual items in the texts. Another important outreach contribution of the project is the continuing Louisiana contribution to an international database, the Banque de données lexicographiques panfrancophone (BDLP). The BDLP is a collaborative project sponsored by the Agence universitaire de la Francophonie that makes available freely, on-line, the differential vocabulary of more than a dozen regions where French is either the everyday or official language. This vocabulary, specific to each region, consists of lexical items that are either absent from Standard French or whose form or semantic range differs from corresponding items of that variety of the language.

Louisiana became a French colony in 1682 when Cavalier de la Salle and his French Canadian exploration team reached the mouth of the Mississippi River. La Salle immediately turned around and said, "Je prends possession de toute la terre vidée par ce fleuve au nom de Louis XIV, roi de France et de Navarre" and named that vast territory Louisiane. With that apparently simple pronouncement, the French theoretically came into possession of the entire Mississippi River basin. In practice, developing colonial Louisiane proved to be considerably more difficult, and it was only the southernmost part of the territory that attracted a large concentration of French settlers. This critical demographic mass carried French language and culture into the 21st century.

South Louisiana is culturally, historically, and linguisti-cally connected to the French-speaking world, but it would be an over-simplification to think of it as a homogenous linguistic region. The varieties of French spoken in Louisiana today have their origins in several distinct waves of immigration. During the French colonial period (1699–1762), colonists from different parts of France and from Quebec insured that the language of the colony would be marked by numerous dialectal features, many of which have endured to the present. The modest social origins of most of the colonists, along with their limited access to education, meant that French in Louisiana would be further dis-tinguished from Standard French by its incorporation of many features typical of the informal spoken style usually referred to as français populaire ("Folk French"). A second significant wave of francophone immigration occurred between 1764 and 1785, when the Spanish authorities, who had assumed control of the colony in 1762, welcomed approximately 3,000 Acadian exiles after their expulsion from their homeland in present-day
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Nova Scotia by the British in 1755. The Acadians brought with them their own variety of French, which had strong roots in the dialects of western France. Finally, during the first half of the nineteenth century, Louisiana's flourishing plantation economy attracted thousands of new French speakers from the former colony of Saint Domingue (present-day Haiti) and from France. Many of these new arrivals were highly educated, and along with Louisiana's own wealthy planter class, they were largely responsible for the presence in Louisiana of what may be called Plantation Society French, a variety closely resembling Standard French.

Plantation Society French has all but disappeared today, but the French of the Acadians and the French of the earlier colonial period eventually merged and now live on in what may be considered a single language showing significant regional variation. Today, this type of French is most commonly referred to as 'Cajun' (cadien in the local spelling). However, because the French of the Acadians (the term from which cadien and 'Cajun' derive) is only one of its sources, and because it is spoken not only by people who call themselves Cajun but also by many Creoles of color and American Indians, we prefer the broader and more neutral label Louisiana French.

The presence of Louisiana Creole adds to the complexity of the linguistic situation of South Louisiana. Although much of its vocabulary overlaps with that of Louisiana French, major differences in grammatical structure make it an autonomous language. For example, tense and aspect are not expressed by endings but by short forms preceding a usually invariable verb stem: pé or apé for the progressive aspect, mo apé chanté 'I'm singing'; va for the future, to va chanté 'you'll sing'; sé for the conditional, yé sé chanté 'they would sing'. The term 'Creole' as used in South Louisiana is quite ambiguous, for it refers to ethnic groups as well as to the language. Historically, the term referred to people born in the Louisiana colony but whose origins lay in Europe or Africa. The label was thus applied to the descendants of the original French (and, later, Spanish) colonists as well as to Louisianans of African descent. The term also came to designate the large mixed-race population of Louisiana, many of whom were Free People of Color (Gens de couleur libres); the members of this group often owned land and were highly educated and cultured. Although the term was also eventually applied to the Louisiana Creole language, it is important to understand that there is not always clear overlap between those who identify themselves as Creoles ethnically and those who speak Louisiana Creole. While there are whites, blacks, and Creoles of color who self-identify as Creole and who speak that language, there are also many members of each group who call themselves Creole but speak either Louisiana French or no variety of French at all.

French was the language of everyday life and government in Louisiana into the 19th century. But the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 and statehood in 1812 placed serious pressure on French Louisiana to conform to the language and culture of the United States. French Creoles understood that their future was necessarily going to be American and they assimilated into the American mainstream. It was not until the arrival of Anglo-Americans, farmers from the Midwest in the late 19th century and oil workers and developers from Texas, Oklahoma, and Pennsylvania in the early 20th century, that the geographically and socially isolated Cajuns followed on the road to assimilation. Also, at that time, Theodore Roosevelt's battle cry, "One nation, one people, one language!", thundered across the land. It induced a quest for national unity that suppressed regional diversity across the country. Free public education was eventually made available throughout the state, but, beginning in 1916, mandatory English language education was imposed in the southern part of the state in a well-meaning effort to bring the French-speaking Cajuns into the American mainstream. As a result, Cajun children were punished for speaking the language of their parents in school, often by teachers with the same last names as the students. Several generations of young Cajun pupils soon associated their native language and culture with social stigmatization; speaking local French was considered something well-raised people did not do in public.

In the late 1940s, the tide began to turn. Soldiers in France during World War II had discovered that the language and culture they had been told to forget made them invaluable as interpreters. After the war, returning GI's sank into the hot bath of their own culture. The glowing embers of the Cajun cultural revival were fanned by local political leaders who used the 1955 bicentennial of the Acadian exile as a rallying point for the revitalization of ethnic pride. The message of 1955 was that the Cajuns had survived the worst; their culture and language were injured but alive. In 1968, after the U.S. Congress passed the Bilingual Education Act, the state of Louisiana officially fostered the movement with the creation of the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL), appointing former U.S. Congressman James Donmengaux its chairman. The message of 1968 was that it was officially all right to be a francophone in public again. But the movement was not without problems. CODOFIL found itself faced with the monumental task of creating a quality French language education program from scratch. Its mandate as a state agency covered the entire state. For these reasons, CODOFIL was forced to water its wine and pressed only for the teaching of Standard French as a second language in elementary schools. A dearth of native-born French teachers compounded the problem, and CODOFIL opted to import 'international brigades', teachers from France, Belgium, and Québec as a stopgap. This, along with a broad program of cultural exchanges, brought the Louisiana French experiment to the attention of the Francophone world. Meanwhile, activists on the home front felt that the indigenous language and culture were once again forced into the shadows as many Cajuns dutifully echoed past criticisms, apologizing
that their language was "not the real French, just broken-down Cajun French."

But conversely, francophone Louisianans no longer felt alone. For their own reasons, France, Belgium, and Québéc became interested in fanning the fires of self-preservation along the bayous. They invested significantly to create a life-support system in the hopes that French culture and language might ultimately survive and even thrive in South Louisiana. Along with money and teachers have come hordes of tourists eager to visit this long-lost, long-forgotten "exotic" place where, against all odds, French has somehow survived in the belly of the beast. This contact has shown the Cajuns, Creoles, and francophone American Indians that, contrary to their childhood lessons, their French works just fine to communicate with folks who speak 'real' French.

Prior to the Dictionary of Louisiana French: As Spoken in Cajun, Creole, and American Indian Communities, no inventory of the vocabulary resources of Louisiana French was available that could be considered comparable in scope and thoroughness to the Dictionary of Louisiana Creole. To be sure, the vocabulary of Louisiana French has received considerable attention from native Louisiana scholars, beginning with Fortier's 1881 article "The Acadians in Louisiana and their dialect," and continuing especially in the 1930's with book-length studies: Read's 1931 Louisiana French and Ditchy's 1932 Les Acadiens louisianais et leur parler. Later in that decade, and continuing into the 1940's, professors of French at Louisiana State University have gradually students devote MA theses to the preparation of differential lexicons of the speech of individual parishes. These were inventories of words not found in Standard French, that is, local lexical particularities, such as éloise (also spelled élouse and asleep) 'lightning', as compared to Standard French foudre; words that are pronounced differently, such as seau 'bucket' [sjo], as compared to Standard French [so]; and words whose meaning differs, such as gremier (also pronounced grénier, grnier) which, in addition to the shared senses 'atic, garret', also means 'ceiling' and 'hay loft' in Louisiana French.

In recent years, more extensive vocabulary inventories have been produced; two that contain lexical particularities are Girolet's 1986 Mots de Louisiane: Études lexicales d'une francophonie and Lavois-Grassin's 1988 unpublished Particularités lexicales du parler cadin en Louisiane (États-Unis): Enquête, dictionnaire et documentation bibliographique, a four-volume doctoral dissertation presented at the University of Paris III (Sorbonne Nouvelle). More notable is Daigle's 1984 bilingual dictionary, A Dictionary of the Cajun Language, that aims to present the total vocabulary available to speakers of Louisiana French. Father Daigle, a native Louisiana French speaker, set himself objectives that were more than simply descriptive. Aware that the language was being lost, he aimed to document the language in its 'purest' state—as it was spoken prior to World War I—as well as to include words from Standard French not used by speakers of Louisiana French. The pedagogical objective of the Daigle dictionary is reflected by the fact that the English-Cajun part is three times as large as the Cajun-English part, 429 versus 165 pages, respectively.

We acknowledge our debt to our precursors, especially to Father Daigle, and it is by standing on their shoulders that we are able to produce a work that extends the range and the wealth of knowledge about the lexical resources of Louisiana French. Unlike Daigle's work, the Dictionary of Louisiana French: As Spoken in Cajun, Creole, and American Indian Communities is properly descriptive in nature. Its purpose is to provide an inventory of the vocabulary of Louisiana French reflecting the speech of the period from 1930 to today. Its great strength is in its empirical nature, a feature that makes it a reliable reflection of current usage. A representative set of Louisiana French-speaking communities were selected consisting of 24 areas and 124 communities within five broad regions of south Louisiana: (1) the coastal marshes (Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Mary parishes); (2) regions along the banks of the Mississippi river (Plaquemines, St. Charles, St. John, St. James, Ascension, West Baton Rouge, Pointe Coupee parishes); (3) the central area (St. Martin, Assumption, Iberia, Lafayette parishes); (4) the north (Avoyelles, Evangeline, St. Landry parishes); (5) the western prairie (Acadia, Cameron, Calcasieu, Jefferson Davis, Vermilion parishes). Interviews were conducted with at least five persons in each of the 24 areas by members of the project team, some assisted by graduate students who were fluent speakers of Louisiana French. Data from the fieldwork were transcribed, prepared for automatic computerized analysis, and stored in a database. Follow-up fieldwork, using an elicitation protocol that included a 100-item questionnaire and visual aids, was conducted to complement the data and to verify items listed in the existing lexical inventories. The verification phase also included a vetting of all entries by the three editors who are native Cajuns and who have brought to the project their intimate knowledge of Louisiana French as well as their commitment to maintain the language as a medium for the expression of the South Louisiana cultural heritage.

In addition to the data collected from fieldwork conducted in the twenty-first century, the Dictionary of Louisiana French: As Spoken in Cajun, Creole, and American Indian Communities contains material compiled from existing inventories and written texts published after 1930 and from recordings and oral corpora from that period. The importance and usefulness of broadening our sources beyond material collected by direct elicitation from current speakers is illustrated by the case of the word pirogue, which describes a type of Cajun canoe still in use today. The examination of previous inventories revealed the existence of two derivatives of pirogue: piroguer 'to transport in a pirogue' and piroguée 'the contents of a pirogue', as in une piroguée de poissons 'a pirogueful of fish'. Knowledge
of the existence of these derivatives led us to discover their still widespread use and to another word that had not been previously attested, pirogueur 'someone who travels in a pirogue'. This case demonstrates that the language still provides speakers with the potential of creating new words by resorting to internal processes such as derivation.

The Dictionary of Louisiana French: As Spoken in Cajun, Creole, and American Indian Communities will be of great interest to scholars from various disciplines. It will be of interest to scholars concerned with issues of language contact because of the significant effect of English on the vocabulary of Louisiana French. Specialists of the French language will find it very useful because the language serves as a sort of repository for words and usages that have disappeared from present-day Standard French. However, the primary readership we aim for are those Louisianans who, considering Louisiana French as a basic cultural asset and as a fundamental component of their heritage, wish to acquire or extend their knowledge of its lexical resources. Such knowledge is essential for all activities designed to maintain and widen its use. Those who are attempting to create a local written norm and to produce written texts need to know which terms are currently used by fluent speakers and which terms are part of the inherited cultural heritage. These lexical resources of Louisiana French are also of great importance to teachers and to developers of pedagogical material who attempt to adapt Standard French to local culture and to revalorize and invigorate the local vernacular linguistic varieties. Because not all potential users of this dictionary are familiar with Standard French or fluent speakers of Louisiana French, we have provided English glosses (equivalents) for the entries, subentries, and illustrative examples. In addition, the dictionary contains a reverse English-French index that makes it possible for users to find the Louisiana French equivalents of English terms.
A User’s Guide to the Dictionary

This section provides a general guide to the organization of the dictionary article (i.e., a headword and all materials subsumed under it). A representative article will first be presented with the various parts labeled. This presentational diagram will be followed by an explanation of certain elements that are not exemplified in the sample article or that require additional information.

Guide to the Article

- Headword in boldface
  - casvel (casuel) [kasvel, kazqel] adj. breakable, fragile <Loc: EV, JE, SM, Di32, Ph36>

- Spelling variants follow the headword entry
  - casvel (casuel) [kasvel, kazqel] adj. breakable, fragile <Loc: EV, JE, SM, Di32, Ph36>

- Phonetic transcription
  - casvel (casuel) [kasvel, kazqel] adj. breakable, fragile <Loc: EV, JE, SM, Di32, Ph36>

- Part of speech
  - crédo [kredo] n.m. [eccl] creed <Loc: Da84>

- Information about the connotations of certain words
  - crédo [kredo] n.m. [eccl] creed <Loc: Da84>

- English equivalent
  - crédo [kredo] n.m. [eccl] creed <Loc: Da84>

- Superscript numbers indicate homonyms
  - facile' [fasi] adj. easy Ma vie était pas facile. My life was not easy. (SL) Pendant longtemps. je faisais du roux mais maintenant c’est un tas plus facile aller au magasin. For a long time I used to make roux, but now it’s a whole lot easier to go to the store [to get it]. (SL) <Loc: SL, TB, Da84, Hi02, Lv88>

- Example illustrates the use of a headword in context

- Translation of example
  - racatcha adj. 1 old, worn, worn out Alle a une robe toute racatcha. She has a worn out old dress. (AV) Une vieille voiture racatcha. An old rattletrap carriage. (SJ)

  2 vulgar, coarse, unrefined <Loc: AV, SJ, SM>
forger [før] v.tr. 1 to forge, fabricate, counterfeit, falsify

forger [før] v.tr. 1 to forge, fabricate, counterfeit, falsify

forger [før] v.tr. 1 to forge, fabricate, counterfeit, falsify

forger [før] v.tr. 1 to forge, fabricate, counterfeit, falsify

Arabic numbers indicate the various meanings of a headword

Subentries are set off by a diamond

Each individual subentry is set off by a bullet

English equivalent of subentry

Example illustrates the use of a subentry in context

Translation of example

Code for source of subentry

fale (fæle) [fæl] n.f. 1 crop, craw, maw (of a bird) 2 set stomach (of a person or animal) ♦ *avoir la fale basse to be hungry I’ai la fale basse. I’m hungry. (Gu00) <Gu00> *avoir la fale creuse to be hungry (LA) *avoir la fale pleine to have eaten enough, be full <LA, La99> <Loc: AV, EV, IB, JD, LA, SB, SJ, SL, SM, TB, VM, Da84, Di32, Fa77, Gu00, La99, Lv88, Re31>

fale (fæle) [fæl] n.f. 1 crop, craw, maw (of a bird) 2 set stomach (of a person or animal) ♦ *avoir la fale basse to be hungry I’ai la fale basse. I’m hungry. (Gu00) <Gu00> *avoir la fale creuse to be hungry (LA) *avoir la fale pleine to have eaten enough, be full <LA, La99> <Loc: AV, EV, IB, JD, LA, SB, SJ, SL, SM, TB, VM, Da84, Di32, Fa77, Gu00, La99, Lv88, Re31>

fale (fæle) [fæl] n.f. 1 crop, craw, maw (of a bird) 2 set stomach (of a person or animal) ♦ *avoir la fale basse to be hungry I’ai la fale basse. I’m hungry. (Gu00) <Gu00> *avoir la fale creuse to be hungry (LA) *avoir la fale pleine to have eaten enough, be full <LA, La99> <Loc: AV, EV, IB, JD, LA, SB, SJ, SL, SM, TB, VM, Da84, Di32, Fa77, Gu00, La99, Lv88, Re31>

frialas [friker] v.tr. to stew (i.e. browning meat in fat then simmering in liquid) ♦ *s’en fricer to be indifferent, be unconcerned Eh bien, je m’en fricasse...Well, it doesn’t matter to time. (IB) <IB, Di32> <Loc: IB, Da84, Di32>
naitre [nɛʁ(ɔ)] (p.p. être [ɛʁ], né [nɛ]) v.intr. to be born *Il a été né et élevé dans le petit village de Mire. He was born and raised in the little town of Mire. (LA, An94) Il y a des petits bébés qui naît qui a pas de bras et qui a pas de mains. There are some babies who are born who don’t have any arms and who don’t have any hands. (EV) 0 •premier né firstborn, eldest <Da84>  
<Loc: AC, AV, EV, LA, TB, An94, Da84>
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Phonetic Symbols used in the Dictionary

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<th>English equivalent</th>
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<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>[taba]</td>
<td>tabac</td>
<td>‘tobacco’</td>
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<td>e</td>
<td>[tæ[ə]]</td>
<td>tacher</td>
<td>‘to stain, spot, soil’</td>
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<td>é</td>
<td>[turtrɛl]</td>
<td>tourterelle</td>
<td>‘dove’</td>
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<td>i</td>
<td>[tapi]</td>
<td>tapis</td>
<td>‘carpet, rug’</td>
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<td>o</td>
<td>[toro]</td>
<td>taureau</td>
<td>‘bull’</td>
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<td>o</td>
<td>[tɔrkju]</td>
<td>tortcou</td>
<td>‘wryneck woodpecker’</td>
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<td>u</td>
<td>[tusaje]</td>
<td>toussailler</td>
<td>‘to cough’</td>
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<td>y</td>
<td>[tyrlyt]</td>
<td>turlutte</td>
<td>‘fight, loud noise’</td>
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<td>ö</td>
<td>[tɔrnkɔ]</td>
<td>tourne-queue</td>
<td>‘mosquito larva’</td>
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<td>æ</td>
<td>[taʃjætɛr]</td>
<td>tafiateur</td>
<td>‘drunkard’</td>
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<td>ð</td>
<td>[t복지]</td>
<td>tomber</td>
<td>‘to fall’</td>
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<td>ð</td>
<td>[tæbuje]</td>
<td>tambouiller</td>
<td>‘to cook’</td>
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<td>ɛ</td>
<td>[topɛ]</td>
<td>taupin</td>
<td>‘burly, large, strong man’</td>
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<td>ð</td>
<td>[lɛdɪ]</td>
<td>lundi</td>
<td>‘Monday’</td>
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<td>[prɔjɛ]</td>
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<td>[opjɪ̃]</td>
<td>opinion</td>
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<td>[tɔ]</td>
<td>te (‘t’)</td>
<td>‘you’</td>
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<td>[tær]</td>
<td>terre</td>
<td>‘earth, world’</td>
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<td>j</td>
<td>[tojas]</td>
<td>toyasse</td>
<td>‘weak coffee’</td>
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<td>q</td>
<td>[traʤɛʁ]</td>
<td>traduire</td>
<td>‘to translate’</td>
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<td>w</td>
<td>[turnwa]</td>
<td>tournoi</td>
<td>‘tournament, match’</td>
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<td>b</td>
<td>[tablo]</td>
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<td>‘blackboard’</td>
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<td>k</td>
<td>[takinri]</td>
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<td>[tirvaʃ]</td>
<td>tire-vache</td>
<td>‘milking-pail’</td>
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<td>d</td>
<td>[tɔdi]</td>
<td>tandis</td>
<td>‘while’</td>
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<td>[fisɛl]</td>
<td>ficelle</td>
<td>‘twine, string’</td>
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<td>g</td>
<td>[figyr]</td>
<td>figure</td>
<td>‘figure, number’</td>
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<td>n</td>
<td>[tjɔnɔ]</td>
<td>tignon</td>
<td>‘turban, headscarf’</td>
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<td>ŋ</td>
<td>[tʃuʃlaŋ]</td>
<td>tchouflanguie</td>
<td>‘small, cheap business’</td>
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<td>h</td>
<td>[hɛʃ]</td>
<td>hache</td>
<td>‘ax’</td>
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<td>ʒ</td>
<td>[tiraj]</td>
<td>tirage</td>
<td>‘milking (of cows)’</td>
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<td>l</td>
<td>[təlɔɾs]</td>
<td>tolérance</td>
<td>‘toleration, endurance’</td>
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<td>m</td>
<td>[tɔm]</td>
<td>tombe</td>
<td>‘tomb, grave’</td>
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<td>n</td>
<td>[tɔniba]</td>
<td>tonibas</td>
<td>‘my goodness’</td>
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<td>tf</td>
<td>[tʃarabo]</td>
<td>tcharabo</td>
<td>‘rifle’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dʒ</td>
<td>[badʒo]</td>
<td>badjo</td>
<td>‘uneducated person’</td>
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<td>p</td>
<td>[tape]</td>
<td>taper</td>
<td>‘to slap, strike, hit’</td>
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<td>r</td>
<td>[tɛf]</td>
<td>tarif</td>
<td>‘tariff, charge, tax’</td>
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<td>s</td>
<td>[tas]</td>
<td>tasse</td>
<td>‘cup’</td>
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<td>t</td>
<td>[tatine]</td>
<td>tatiner</td>
<td>‘dabble’</td>
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<td>v</td>
<td>[tru]</td>
<td>trouve</td>
<td>‘discovery’</td>
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<tr>
<td>z</td>
<td>[trezɔ]</td>
<td>trésor</td>
<td>‘treasure’</td>
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Additional sounds occurring in words of English origin

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<td>ɑ</td>
<td>[puːk]</td>
<td>park</td>
<td>‘to park’</td>
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<td>i</td>
<td>[mistʃik]</td>
<td>mistake</td>
<td>‘mistake’</td>
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<tr>
<td>ʌ</td>
<td>[blæf]</td>
<td>bluff</td>
<td>‘bluff, deception’</td>
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<tr>
<td>ɔ</td>
<td>[bigbɔ]</td>
<td>big shot</td>
<td>‘big shot’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ɑʊ</td>
<td>[blekɑu]</td>
<td>black out</td>
<td>‘to black out’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ɑɪ</td>
<td>[blænt(ɪ)]</td>
<td>blind</td>
<td>‘blind’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eɪ</td>
<td>[meɪ]</td>
<td>mail</td>
<td>‘mail’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oʊ</td>
<td>[bɹʊk]</td>
<td>broke</td>
<td>‘broke, penniless’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ɪ</td>
<td>[mɪsdɪl]</td>
<td>misdeal</td>
<td>‘misdeal (in cards)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ə</td>
<td>[pært]</td>
<td>party</td>
<td>‘party’</td>
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Pronunciation notes

We summarize here some of the salient characteristics of Louisiana French pronunciation, focusing in particular on features that distinguish it from the pronunciation of Standard French.

Vowels

On the whole, the vowels of Louisiana French are not substantially different from their Standard French counterparts. However, it is noteworthy that Louisiana French often preserves the nasal vowel [ɛ̃] (pronounced with the lips slightly rounded) as in lundi ‘Monday’ [lɛ̃di], which in the French of Paris and other parts of France has largely been replaced by [ɛ] (pronounced with the lips spread). Though [ɛ̃] may be merging with [ɛ] in Louisiana as well—variable pronunciations may be encountered for many words (defunt ‘deceased’ [dɛfʊnt]/[dɛfɛ̃], lundi [lɛ̃di]/[lɛdi], un livre ‘a book’ [ɛlvʁ]/[ɛlv]. Lejeune [lɛʒœn]/[lɛʒœn])—most speakers of Louisiana French still make use of the contrast between [ɛ] and [ɛ̃] to maintain a distinction between certain pairs of words, such as brin ‘bit, small quantity’ [брɛ̃] and brun ‘brown, light complexion’ [брɛ̃], whereas Parisians tend to pronounce both as [брɛ̃]. Another distinguishing feature of Louisiana French is the widespread nasalization of the vowels [ɑ], [ɛ], [ɛ̃], [o], [ɔ] and, less frequently, of [i], [y], and [u] when they occur before a nasal consonant: femme ‘woman’ [fɛm] > [fɛm], [fɛm], chêne ‘oak tree’ [ʃɛn] > [ʃɛn]; pomme ‘apple’ [pɔm] > [pɔm]. As the example of femme ‘woman’ [fɛm], [fɛm] illustrates, the nasal vowels [ɑ] and [ɔ] are often confluenced in Louisiana French, with words that in Standard French are pronounced with [ɑ] frequently being realized with a vowel more closely resembling [ɔ]: ensemble ‘together’ [ɛ̃ʃɛl], campagne ‘country’ [kɑ̃pã]. We transcribe such words only with [ɑ] ([u̯sɛm], [kɔ̃pɛ]), but the reader should be aware that they may often hear them pronounced with [ɔ], as well.

A few remarks are also in order regarding the oral (non-nasal) vowels. When it occurs before [r], especially at the end of a word or before another consonant, the vowel [ɛ] of Louisiana French frequently lowers. The degree of lowering varies. The vowel [ɛ], which is similar to the sound of the vowel in the English word cut, is most commonly heard. However, some speakers will lower further to the vowel [æ], as in the English exclamation ah. Examples include frère ‘brother’ [frɛr] > [frɛr] > [frar] and personne ‘no one’ [pɜ̃sɔn] > [pærɔsn] > [pærɔsn]. The low back vowel [o], which is intermediate in quality between the vowels
Quand ça arrivait chez eux-autres, il fallait que ça se lave avec l'alcool pour pas amener la maladie. When they got home, they had to wash with alcohol so as to not bring in the disease. (TB) 2 to take, transport (s.o. or s.t. somewhere) On les aménait tout partout parce qu'elle avait pas de char. We took them everywhere because they didn't have a car. (TB) Ce bougre-là était pas balancé. Ils ont eu pour l'amener à Pineville. That fellow was mentally unstable. They had to take him to Pineville [State Mental Hospital]. (LA) 3 to lead (an animal) *Amener un cheval. To lead a horse. (Da84) 4 to lead (a life) *Amener une bonne vie. To lead a good life. (Da84) II s'amener v.pron. 1 to take along, bring along (for o.s.) Ça s'amusait du pays aussi mais si le pain venait à moisir, wel, eux-autres avaient ces gâteaux-là à manger. They brought along bread too, but if the bread got moldy, well, they had those cakes to eat. (TB) 2 to approach, draw near Ça avait été oublié par le weather bureau de la ville qu'il y avait du mauvais temps qui s'aménait. They had been warned by the city weather bureau that there was bad weather approaching. (LF) 3 to arrive, show up Le vieux s'amusait sur la plage. The old man arrived on the beach. (LF) 4 to bring o.s. (to do s.t.) *amener du tracas to bring trouble, cause trouble, make trouble (Da84) amener qqn au berceau to make s.o. obey, make s.o. give in <AV, La99> amener (un enfant) au monde to bring (a child) into the world. Elle était morte avant qu'elle ayeu aménée au monde. She was dead before she was brought into the world. (LF) <LF, Da84> amener un tapage (du train) to carry on a racket, make noise *Quand elle s'a réveillée, il y avait un moqueur qu'était après amener du train côté de sa fenêtre. When she awoke, there was a mockingbird that was making a racket next to her window. (LA, An94) <LA, An94, Da84> *est-ce que tu amènes la pluie? expression used to greet a visitor one hasn’t seen for a long time <La99> <Loc: AC, AV, EV, LA, LF, SL, SM, TB, VM, An84, An94, Da84, Hio2, La99, LV88, Ph86> aménotter / amiable
bavarder / bébé

juste après bavarder à la manière des vieux. They were just gabbling like old folks. (LA) <Loc: LA, Da84, Hi02>
bavarder², -euse [bavarder, -ez] adj. talkative, garrulous
Lui, il est bavarder, mais son frère, tu l’entends proche pas. He’s talkative, but his brother, you almost never hear him. (LA) <Loc: LA, SM, Da84, Lv88>
bavardeur², -euse [bavardeur, -ez] n. babbler, prattler, talkative person Il était un bavardeur sans pareil. He was a bigmouth without equal. (Lv88) <Loc: LA, SM, Da84, Lv88>
bave [bav] n.f. drool <Loc: Da84>
baver [bave] v.intr. to slobber, slaver, drool Léon, son mari, va te fondre des gratons qui vont te faire baver. Leon, her husband, will fry cracklins that will make you drool. (VM) <Loc: VM, Da84, Hi02>
baves [bav] n.pl. disease of animals <Loc: Lv88>
bavette [bavet] n.f. baby bib <Loc: Da84>
baveur [baver] adj. dribbling, drooling <Loc: EV, Ph36>
bavoler [bavole] v.intr. to slobber, drool Il a bavolé dans ma figure. He slobbered in my face. (VM) <Loc: VM>
baye *see baille'
bazar [bazar] n.m. 1 bazaar, fair 2 unaccompanied group singing and dancing event <Loc: ID, VM, Da84, Lv88>
béaba [beabu] n.m. alphabet <Loc: JE, Di32>
BEAN [bin] n.m./f. 1 bean 2 *BEAN blanc white bean <TB> *BEAN vert green bean <JE> <Loc: JE, LF, TB, LV88>
BEAT (beater) [bit, bite] v.t. to beat, surpass Il l’a béaté à la course. He beat him in the race. (Lv88) Il l’a béaté à l’école. He beat you at school. (VM) 0 *ça me BEAT beats me, I don’t know <Lv88> <Loc: TB, VM, LV88>
beater *see BEAT
beau, belle [bo, bel] adj. 1 beautiful, nice, pretty, handsome
Tu parles du joli monde. Lui il est beau garçon et sa sœur, elle est belle fille. Talk about some beautiful people. He’s a handsome boy and his sister is a pretty girl. (LA) *Il est en beau homme. He’s a fine-looking man. (EV, Ph36) Elle avait des beaux cheveux bouclés. She had beautiful curly hair. (LA) 2 large, big, fine C’est son frère qu’a eu le plus beau morceau de terre. It’s his brother who got the finest piece of land. (LA) 3 nice, pleasant, sunny (of the weather)
*Il fait beau. The weather is nice. (Da84) 0 *au beau milieu in the very middle. <Da84> *j’ai beau dire et j’ai beau faire no matter what I say or do <Da84> <Loc: EV, LA, TB, VM, Da84, Hi02, L99>
beau [bo] n.m. boyfriend, sweetheart Cette fille a quinze beaux. That girl has fifteen sweethearts. (SM) 0 *faire le beau to stand or sit on its hind legs by itself (of a dog) <L999> <Loc: JE, LF, SM, Da84, Hi02, L999, LV88>
beaucoup (boucoup) [boku, buku] adv. 1 very Avec doux piastres et demie, il pouvait pas aller beaucoup loin. With twelve and a half dollars, he couldn’t go very far. (SL) *C’était beaucoup une grosse salle de danse. It was a very big dance hall. (LA, An94) *Un beaucoup vieux homme. A very old man. (An77) On l’a vu il y a pas beaucoup longtemps. We saw him not very long ago. (IB) C’est beaucoup mauvais de dire ça. It’s very bad to say that. (SL) *Il avoit beaucoup faim. He was very hungry. (LA, An94) Ma femme vient avec moi beaucoup souvent. My wife comes with me very often. (SM) C’est pas beaucoup bien dit. It’s not very well-said. (SM) 2 much, a lot, a great deal Il est méchant, tu peux pas beaucoup le truster, c’est tout. He is mean, you can’t trust him much, that’s all. (AS) *Ça coûte beaucoup pour l’éducation à Rover. It costs a lot for Rover’s education. (LA, An94) *Et l’enfant continuait a rire. Ça rassurait l’homme beaucoup. And the child continued to laugh. That bothered the man a lot. (LA, An94) *J’apprécierais ça beaucoup. Monsieur. I would appreciate that a great deal, sir. (EV, An94) *Ça voyait comme une petite lumière, pas beaucoup plus grosse qu’une chandelier. It looked like a little light, not much bigger than a candle. (VM, An94) *Merci beaucoup, Madame. Thank you very much, ma’am. (VM, An94) *beaucoup de many, a lot of, a great deal of, much Et dans ce temps-là ils aviont pas beaucoup des affaires à faire d’autre chose que d’assir et se contor des contes. And in those days, they didn’t have a lot of other things to do than to sit down and tell each other stories. (EV) Sur la Grande Île, il y a beaucoup de bec-à-citeaux. On Grande Île there are many black skimmers. (JE) Il e beaucoup d’argent. He has a great deal of money. (JE) <EV, JE, LA, An94> <Loc: AC, AS, AV, EV, IB, JE, LF, SL, SM, TB, VM, An77, An94, Da84, Hi02, Lv88, Ph36>
beau-fils [bofis] n.m. 1 son-in-law 2 stepson <Loc: Da84>
beau-frère [bofra] n.m. 1 brother-in-law 2 stepbrother <Loc: TB, Da84, Hi02>
beau-père [bopaer] n.m. 1 father-in-law 2 stepfather <Loc: AC, An02>
beauté [bote] n.f. 1 beauty *Signe de beauté. Beauty mark. (Da84) 2 beautiful woman Je connais pas si l’a dévo vu sa femme, mais tu parles d’une beauté. I don’t know if you have seen his wife but she is a real beauty. (LA) <Loc: LA, Da84>
beaux-parents [boparan] n.m.pl. 1 parents-in-law, in-laws - step-parents <Loc: Da84>
bébé [beb, be'b] n. 1 baby 2 [term of endearment] babe, baby
*Ti viens avec mon, bébé? Are you coming with me, babe? (EV, Ph36) <Loc: EV, SB, SM, Lv88, Ph36>
bébé [bebe, bibi, boibé, beb] n.m. 1 baby, child, infant 2 youngest child of a family Notre bébé a quatorze ans. Our youngest
filet [file] n.m. filet, ground sasaras leaves (used as a seasoning and thickening agent in gumbo) <Loc: AV, CL, EV, IB, JE, LA, LF, SB, SJ, SL, SM, TB, VM, Da84, Guoo, Hio2, Lv88, Ph36, Re31>

filee [fie] n.f. to spin Filer du coton. To spin cotton. (EV) Il y a une tige de filer, mais elle connaît pas à (loc. intr.) coudre ni filer, mais elle connaît frapper le fil sur le métier. She doesn’t know how to card or spin, but she knows how to weave. (Lv88) 2 a creep, climb (of plants) Mes mirlitons sont après filer tout partout dessus la galerie. My vegetable pears are climbing all over the porch. (LA) Défense Titante disait que c’était dur de piocher le coton quand les liserons prenaient des mors parce que ça filetait partout. My late aunt used to say that it was hard to hoe the cotton when the morning glories got into them because they spread everywhere. (Guoo) 3 to get out, scrap, beat it *File! Get out! (Da84) ô filer un mauvais coton to be in a bad way (of health or business) <CL>.<Loc: AC, CL, EV, JD, LA, SM, TB, VM, Da84, Guoo, Lv88>

filet [file] n.m. to fillet Ma femme va filer les poissons. My wife will fillet the fish. (SM) <Loc: SM>

filet [file] n.m. to add filet to (a gumbo, etc.) Il a filé son gonfo. He added filet to his gumbo. (EV) <Loc: EV>

filet n.m. see fileuil

filet n.m. see entiler

filet [file, file] n.m. 1 net, netting Les meules, non, ça mord pas, ça, l’époussete ça avec un filet, avec un épeurier. Mules, no, they don’t bite, you catch them with a net, with a castnet. (TB) 2 a bird trap made in the shape of a bow, with horsehair slippnocks <Loc: LF, TB, Hio2>

filet [file, file] n.m. drink, shoot (of liquor) Il a débouché sa bouteille et […] lui a donné un bon filet de vin. He opened his bottle and gave him a good little glass of wine. (SL) ô petit filet drink Tu veux boire un petit filet et même? Do you want to have a drink with me? (Guoo) ô prendre (boire) un filet to have a drink Viens prendre un filet avec nous autres. Come have a drink with us. (VM) <Loc: AV, EV, IB, JD, LF, SL, SM, VM, Da84, Di32, Guoo, Hio2, Lv88, Ph36>

filet [file, file] n.m. fillet, cut of meat or fish Le filet c’est quand tu prends le filet knife and puis tu le coupes et tu êtes tous les os dessus le poisson. The fillet is when you take the fillet knife and then you cut and remove all the bones from the fish. (SM) <Loc: SM, VM>

filet [file, file] n.m. frenum (of the tongue) ô avoir le filet coupé to talk without restraint <Da84> <Loc: Da84>

filand n.f. see fileuil

file [fi] n.f. 1 girl, female child Les filles, on aimait jouer avec des poupees, ça c’était notre meilleur passe-temps. Girls liked to play with dolls, that was our favorite pastime. (SM) 2 daughter Ils ont renvoyé leur fille quand ils ont trouvé qu’elle était en famille. They sent their daughter away when they found out she was pregnant. (EV) 3 girl, young (usu. unmarried) woman Ô Elle était facilement la fille la plus recherchée dans toute la cypriote. She was easily the most sought after girl in the swamp. (S097) Ses amis lui ont donné une pousse pour qu’il demande à la fille de danser. His friends gave him a push to ask the girl to dance. (VM) Ô Ô titi file [term of endearment] little girl <Lv88> Ô vieille fille old maid, spinster, woman who has never married <LF, Da84> <Loc: LF, JE, Da84, Hio2>

fillette [fijet] n.f. 1 little girl 2 goddaughter, female godchild <Loc: SB, SJ, Da84>

fileuil n.f. see fileuil

fileuil [filand, fileu, filol, fillot] [fijoh, fijoh, fijol, fijol] n.m. godson, male godchild <Loc: AV, EV, IB, LF, SM, TB, VM, Da84, Di32, Lf88, Ph36, Re31>

fileul [fileu, fileole] [fijol, fijoz, fijol] n.f. goddaughter, female godchild <Loc: AV, EV, IB, JD, LF, SM, TB, Da84, Fa77, Lv88, Ph36, Re31>

fileuse [fijoz] adj. effeminate, sissified <Loc: Fa77>

fileuse n.f. see fileule

filol n.f. see fileuil

fillole n.f. see fileuil

filloit n.f. see fileul

fillole n.f. see fileuil

filolet n.f. little girl <Loc: AV, SB, SJ>

film [fim] n.m. 1 film, roll of film Quand on développe du film, il n’a pas clairet du tout dans le darkroom. When you develop film, there’s no light at all in the darkroom. (VM) 2 film, movie <Loc: TB, VM>

filou [fjou] adj. 1 sly, shrewd, sharp, cunning Il est filou comme tout, il faut le guetter. He’s sly as anything, you have to watch him. (VM) Ces souris sont assez filous, ils mangent et échappent. Those mice are pretty clever, they eat and escape. (VM) 2 crooked, underhanded Je ferai jamais affaire avec du monde filou comme ça. I would never do business with crooked people like that. (VM) 3 thieving, sticky-fingered Un garçon filou. A thieving boy. (SJ) ô filou comme un renard sly as a fox, very sly <VM, La99> <Loc: AV, JD, SJ, VM, Da84, La99>

filou [fjou] n.m. 1 sly, shrewd, sharp, cunning person Un fin filou. A very sly person. (IB) 2 crook Ô Si qu’équa’un a pas d’esprit, pas d’défense, un autre, un malin, un filou comme on dit ici, va prendre l’avantage et l’aire travailler pour rien. If someone has no wits, no defenses, someone else, a cunning person, a “filou” as we say here, will take advantage of him and make him work for nothing. (Gr80) ô faire le filou comme un chien basset a to do things while trying not to be noticed b to have a guilty look on one’s face <TB, La99> <Loc: IB, TB, Da84, La99>

filouterie [filutri] n.f. thievery, cheating, trickery <Loc: Da84>

fils [fis] (1fis) n.m. son C’est mon premier fils, j’ai trois fils. He’s my first son, I have three sons. (LF) ô fils de
revenu [re-vo-nu] n.m. income, profit, revenue <Loc: Da84>

REVENUE [re-va-ny] n.m. revenir. Treasury Department revenue agent (responsible for the destruction of illegal stills and arrest of bootleggers) J’ai vu les REVENUES à passer, j’ai monté sur un petit cheval rouge, il y avait. Les REVENUES passaient dans le chemin. I saw the revenuers coming by, so I got on a little red horse that was there. The revenuers were passing by on the road. (SL) <Loc: SL>

réver [re-ver] v.tr. to dream *J’ai rêvé hier au soir que tu m’avais donné ton cheval. I dreamed last night that you had given me your horse. (SL, An94) II v.intr. to dream Bien rare que je vas rêver à quelque chose. It’s quite rare for me to dream of anything. (TB) Je rêve après des choses que je vas faire. I dream about things that I’m going to do. (TB) *J’avais rêvé-z’a mes chers ‘titts yeux noirs, qui est partie. I dreamed about my dear little black-eyed girl, who has gone away. (ch: ‘Tits yeux noirs) <Loc: SL, TB, An94, Da84, Hio22>

reverdir [re-ver-dir, ar-ver-dir, ær-ver-dir] v.intr. to become green again Ça va prendre quelque temps avant que les mouches vont reverdir. It’ll take some time before the marshes become green again. (VM) <Loc: VM, Da84>

révérence [re-ver-[s] n.f. reverence <Loc: Da84>

réverer [re-ver-er] adj. [colloq.] reverend <Loc: Da84>

révers [re-ver, ar-ver, ær-ver] n.m. reverse, wrong side (of cloth, clothing, etc.) <Loc: Da84>

réverse [re-ver-se, ar-ver-se, ær-ver-se] v.tr. to repour, pour again Reverse-moi un verre de vin. Pour me another glass of wine. (VM) <Loc: VM, Da84>

réverse vœe renverser

réveur, -euse [re-ver, -oz] n. dreamer <Loc: Da84>

réveir [re-vo-ir, ar-vo-ir, ær-vo-ir] v.tr. to pour out again, empty again Combin de fois il faudra qu’on revide la glacière cette année? How many times will we have to empty the refrigerator again this year? (EV) <Loc: EV, Da84>

révérer [re-vo-ver, ar-vo-ver, ær-vo-ver] v.intr. 1 to turn around, turn back *Il a voulu revivre dans son vieux char, il a embourbé. He wanted to turn back in his old car, he got stuck in the mud. (An97) Tu pouvais revivre au bout du chemin là à la Ponte la-bas si c’était pour venir ici et parler d’anglais. You might as well have turned back at the top of the road to Ponte aux Chênes if you were coming down here to speak English. (TB) Et essus a ervié et eusse a revenu back chez eux. And they turned around and came back home. (LF) 2 to go back. Mais si tu revives vers l’affaire à peu près 20 ou 25 et passé le Cadien aurait pu jamais avoir une compagnie parce que les hougres qu’avaient les hougres et tout, eux autres voulaient pas faire bargune avec les Cadiens. But if you go back to 20 or 25 years ago the Cajun could never have had a company, because the guys who had the banks and all, they didn’t want to bargain with Cajuns. (TB) ☞ revive à l’endroit to turn right side out Revive ma robe à l’endroit. Turn my dress right side out. (TB) <TB> (se) revivre de bord to turn around Et just j’ai reviré de bord et mettre le verre sur le cabinet et le Alka Seltzer assisit, MAN, c’est comme un logue qu’a tombé par terre. And I just turned around to put the glass on the cabinet and the Alka Seltzer too, man, it was like a log that fell to the ground. (TB) Tu peux te revivre de bord, je veux pus te voir. You can just turn around, I don’t want to see you anymore. (LA) <Loc: EV, IB, LA, LF, SM, TB, VM, An97, Da84, Lr88, Ph96>

revivre [re-vo-vib(r), ær-vib(r), ær-vo-vib(r)] v.intr. to revive, come back to life Son deuil est fini. Elle pourra revivre auster. Her mourning is over. She will be able to live again. (VM) <Loc: VM, Da84>

revoir [re-vo-var, ar-var, ær-var] v.tr. to see again Il avait un gros sac d’or et les belles bottes du diable. Fait, tout était magnifique, ils est ont contents de le revir. He had a big sack of gold and the devil’s beautiful boots. So, everything was wonderful, they were happy to see him again. (LA) Au revoir, mes amis. Je vas vous revoir sur mon autre grand tour. Goodbye, my friends. I will see you again on my other big tour. (AV) Je le revrais pas avant le lundi matin. I didn’t see him again before Monday morning. (AC) II se revivre v.pron. to see each other again, meet each other again On va se revoir dans la semaine qui vient. We’ll meet again next week. (LA) *On va se revivre plus tard. We’ll see each other again later. (L99) ☞ au revoir [ar-var, ar-var, ær-var] goodbye, so long <SB, SM, Da84, Hio22> *on va se revoir see you later, good-bye for now <L99, Lr88> <Loc: AC, AV, LA, VM, Hio2, L99, Lr88>

revoler [re-vo-lôr, ar-lôr, ær-lôr] v.intr. to fly again Après le 11 de septembre, je crois pus que je vas revoler. After September 11th, I don’t think I’ll ever fly again. (VM) <Loc: LV, VM, Da84>

revoler² [re-vo-lôr, ar-lôr, ær-lôr] v.tr. to steal again Ces malfaiteurs ont revolé ma fauchette. Those ne'er-do-wells stole my lawn mower again. (LA) <Loc: LA, VM, Da84>

révoltant, -e [revol-tã, -ät] adj. revolting, disgusting Ca me dégoûte. C’est revoltant! That disgusts me. It’s revolting! (ThCa: Mlle misères) <Loc: Da84, ThCa>

révolte [re-vôlt] n.f. revolt, revolution, rebellion <Loc: Da84>

révolter [re-vo-lèr] v.intr. to revolter, rebel Les esclaves ont révolté. The slaves revolted. (VM) II se révolter v.pron. to revolt, rebel Il est rendu à l’âge qu’il se révolte contre tout quelque chose et tout quelqu’un. He’s gotten to the age where he rebels against everything and everyone. (VM) <Loc: VM, Da84>

révolution [re-vôlyôsjɔ] n.f. revolution *Pendant la Révolution d”France, i’les nobles” s”ont rangés ici. During the