

## Let's tink about dat: Interdental fricatives in Cajun English

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### ABSTRACT

The English of bilingual Cajuns living in southern Louisiana has been pejoratively depicted as an accented English; foremost among the stereotypes of Cajun English is the use of *tink* and *dat* for *think* and *that*. We present a variationist study of /θ/ and /ð/ in the speech of bilingual Cajuns in St. Landry Parish. The results show a complex interrelationship of age, gender, and social network. One of the major findings is a v-shaped age pattern rather than the regular generational model that is expected. The older generation use more of the dental variants [t,d] than all others, the middle-aged dramatically decrease their use, but the young show a level of usage closer to the old generation. The change is attributed to both language attrition and the blossoming of the Cajun cultural renaissance. Interestingly, neither young men in open networks nor women of all ages in open networks follow the v-shaped age pattern. In addition, they show opposite directions of change: men in open networks lead the change to [d], whereas women in open networks drop the dental variants of [t,d] almost entirely.

The variety of English spoken by people of Acadian descent (called Cajuns) in southern Louisiana has been the subject of pejorative comment for a long time. For many years a famous Louisiana comic has relied on a parody of the accent of Cajuns speaking English. Jokes about two Cajun men by the name of Boudreaux and Thibodeaux—hapless hunters and trappers who always used to be outwitted but nowadays are more likely to end up the winners—often depend on a caricature of Cajun English for their humorous effect. An oft-repeated saying by a popular Cajun chef—“Ah garontee you”—has become a stereotype of Cajun English and is known by everyone in southern Louisiana. The film industry, too, has played its role in helping to identify this variety of English as a kind of “faux français,” making emblematic use of words like *cher*.

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Scholars (Scott 1992; Walton 1994) have also recognized Cajun English as an ethnic contact dialect of Southern American English. Although some morpho-syntactic forms have been identified, Cajun English has been primarily described in terms of its phonological features. There is no exhaustive study of the distinctive linguistic characteristics of Cajun English, although some forms have been highlighted as typical or perhaps stereotypical: for example, the interdental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ realized by the dental stops [t] and [d]; the failure to aspirate the stops /p,t,k/; the trilled /r/; the dropping of /h/ in word-initial position. See Dubois and Horvath (1999) for discussion of some of these other sociolinguistic variables in Cajun English.

In Louisiana, Cajuns are frequently characterized as using the forms *dis* and *dat* for *this* and *that*. The source of this dialectal feature (like the others previously mentioned) in the speech of bilingual Cajun people, and to a lesser extent in the speech of monolingual English-speaking Cajuns, is popularly believed to be the result of interference from Cajun French and is therefore seen as accented English. While rejecting interference from French as a primary source of Cajun English features, Walton (1994:93, 98) nevertheless suggested that a close examination is needed of the distribution in Cajun English of voiced and voiceless interdental fricatives and stops before such interference can be completely ruled out.

In this article, we present a variationist analysis of the use of stops for the variables (th) and (dh)<sup>1</sup> in Cajun English. We determine how widespread this stereotypical feature is within the St. Landry Cajun community in southern Louisiana. Being particularly interested in assessing the source of the stops, we examine the vernacular features of the interdental fricatives in English and demonstrate that the substitution of stops for fricatives by French speakers is not a necessary result of the lack of interdental fricatives in French but a complex natural sound change occurring in several linguistic communities.

Stops are more frequently used by the older generation, regardless of whether or not they grew up in an English-only or French-only environment. Although we would expect the younger generation (all of whom were raised in English) to continue the dramatic decrease in the use of stops for both (th) and (dh) adopted by the middle-aged speakers, the young age group's use is close to the proportion of stops in the speech of the older generation. We argue that, although stops produced by the older group can be considered part of an ethnic accent, stops in the younger generation play a very different role. Because being Cajun is now socially and economically advantageous, members of the younger generation as a whole take pride in their Cajun identity. Since the functions of the ancestral language have been significantly reduced now to include only the immediate family domain, the only way to signal their "Cajunness" is left to English. Stops in the speech of the young age group therefore function as an identity marker. In addition, closer examination of the results show that women in open networks do not participate (linguistically speaking) in the Cajun revival, whereas men in open networks strongly participate.

## THE ENGLISH INTERDENTAL FRICATIVES

The interdental fricative has been a part of English since its earliest known form. In Old English, voicing was totally predictable: [ð] occurred only in medial position between voiced sounds, and [θ] occurred elsewhere. Borrowings from Old French and from Greek have served to extend the distribution of [ð] so that it now also occurs in initial and final positions. However, in initial position [ð] is restricted to a small number of function words, such as *the*, *then*, *this*, *that*, and *those*. These words are of Old English origin, and one would expect them to begin with [θ]. Gimson (1980:185) suggested that the voicing of the fricative in initial position may have been the result of the fact that these words are "frequently medial and unaccented in an utterance."

For almost as long as the English language has had this pair of sounds, there have been variant pronunciations. Dobson (1957:948, as cited in Ó hÚrdail, 1997:145) provided historical evidence of variation for the voiced interdental fricative (*feather/feader*) as well as for its voiceless counterpart (*mother/moter*) as early as the 16th or 17th centuries in some English dialects.<sup>2</sup> That interdental fricatives are highly marked sounds is evidenced by the fact that they are rare in the languages of the world and that they are learned late by children (Wells, 1982:96). Nevertheless, Standard English, no matter which national variety is selected, admits no variation, and all learners of English are taught that they must learn how to pronounce these sounds properly.

There are two sets of alternates that regularly substitute in English for (th) and (dh), with the voicing distinction being retained in either case.

1. A stop [t,d]. The realization may be either dental or alveolar. For this type of substitution, the place of articulation remains the same, but the manner of articulation changes. Labov (1966:55) also noted an affricate [tθ,dð] for New York City.
2. A labiodental fricative [f,v]. The place of articulation changes completely, but the manner of articulation remains.

It is difficult to ascertain the regional variation associated with these two modes of substitution for the interdental fricatives. There is no description that we have found that would suggest that they are interchangeable or both present in a single dialect (e.g., as positional variants).

The substitutions most frequently reported in the literature are the dental stops [t,d]. Their usage is categorical in some dialects of Irish English (Wells, 1982:429). Clarke (1997:213) reported that their presence in many dialects in places settled by Irish migrants is often attributed to Irish English as a source dialect, although she cited other possibilities. They are well known as variables throughout most of the United States (Labov, 1966:55). They are found in Caribbean English (Wells, 1982:565), Liberian English (Wells, 1982:635), Indian English (Wells, 1982:629), Appalachian English (Wolfram & Christian, 1976), Cajun English (Walton, 1994), the West Indies (Wells, 1982:204), Maori English (Bell, 1997), and maybe wherever English is spoken. The labiodental fricatives [f,v] are certainly found in London Cockney speech (Wells, 1982:328) and in Australian English in all

positions (Horvath, 1985:96–97). In American dialects, especially in southern English, [f] is most often reported, but only in final position: for instance, in North Carolina (Morgan, 1971:277–278) and in central Kentucky (Davis, 1971), where it is a feature of the speech of both blacks and whites. In Afro-American Vernacular English, Wolfram, Christian, and Dube (1989:33) described [f] substituting for (th) in medial and initial positions and [v] for (dh) in medial position.

There is no lack of speculation about the source of the substitutions. For instance, the realization of (th) as [f] in final position in North Carolina (Morgan, 1971) is attributed to multiple sources: either Cockney and Irish seamen or German and Swiss settlers who did not have the sound in their language. The source of the dental stops as substitutes is often attributed to Irish English, but it is just as often suggested that they were brought into English by nonnative speakers who had a difficult time pronouncing /θ/ and /ð/. Wells (1982:204) suggested an African influence when English became established in the West Indies. Finally, as we have mentioned, French is often regarded as the source for Cajun English.

The sociolinguistic facts about these two types of substitution are fairly clear. Both alternatives are stigmatized, perhaps more heavily in the major English-speaking countries than in places where a creole with English as the lexifier language (e.g., Jamaican Creole) is spoken. The labiodental fricative seems to be the most heavily stigmatized. Wells (1982:96) went so far as to say that the use of [f,v] “by working-class adult Londoners and American blacks can . . . be regarded as persistent infantilism,” since these are the sounds that children substitute when they are acquiring English as a first language.

The interdental fricatives—easy for nonnative speakers to distinguish but not very easy for them to pronounce—are phonologically marked and are likely to undergo unmarking, resulting in the substitution of dental or alveolar [t,d] or [f,v]. The vernacular variants are simply the result of the natural linguistic path taken in many widespread speech communities, especially where an English dialect can develop more or less independently of the pressures of the standard variety. One would be hard-pressed to find a nation where English is spoken without at least one sociolect which substitutes either a stop [t,d] or labiodental fricative [f,v] for (th,dh).

In the case of Cajun English, if the source of the (th,dh) variable is interference from French, we would expect that the English of the older generation, who learned French first or who used French for a wide variety of functions, would be most affected by the interference, and that these variables would decrease in the middle-aged group and would be further reduced in the speech of the young, who grew up in English-only nuclear families and learned French as a second language from members of their extended families.

#### THE CAJUN FRENCH/ENGLISH CORPUS

The data for this study are taken from the Cajun French/English Sociolinguistic Survey (Dubois, 1997c). The survey is designed to include a representative sample

of the linguistic practices of the Cajun community as well as to investigate the specific features of Cajun French and Cajun English. Four French-speaking parishes are included in the study in order to compare the linguistic varieties within Cajun communities. In addition, an analysis of style-shifting in response to the different varieties of French used by the interviewers forms an important part of the study.

The sample consists of 120 fluent French speakers who were born, raised, and still live in their home parish. Because the primary goal of the survey is the investigation of French, one elderly monolingual Cajun French speaker in each parish was interviewed. The Cajun French monolingual speech represents the most conservative local linguistic norm and serves as a benchmark for comparison with the variety used by the bilingual speakers. All other subjects were bilingual (i.e., also spoke English fluently); no interviews with monolingual Cajun English speakers were collected.

The 120 speakers were divided by sex and age, ranging from 19 to 102 years old and forming three age groups: 19–39 years of age (young), 40–59 (middle-aged), and 60 or over (old). The interviewers were given a questionnaire, but were trained to encourage an interactional pattern in which the interviewee was able to take the lead.

The speakers were interviewed three times by three different interviewers. The first interview, lasting between 30 and 45 minutes, was conducted in English by a native English speaker from southern Louisiana. The questions dealt mainly with sociodemographic topics concerning the speakers and their family (residence, work, education, parents' origins), their social network, and their linguistic usage of French versus English. The second interview was conducted in Cajun French by an insider-interviewer from each community for approximately 90 minutes; it was the longest portion of the general interview. The questions asked were about various Cajun interests such as the French language, cuisine, music and dance, festivals, gambling, the weather, religion, and hard times. The third interview, lasting between 30 and 45 minutes, was conducted in French by an English native speaker who spoke French learned at school. Issues discussed related to the economy, the job market, violence, and health problems. For all four communities, more than 300 hours of speech were collected: 60 hours in English, 180 hours in Cajun French, and 60 hours in French. The resulting corpus contains more than three million words, more than a quarter of which has been transcribed according to the conventions adopted by Dubois (1997c).

Although all of the speakers in the sample are fluent bilinguals, it is important to remember that a study of Cajun French is the primary research goal; thus all speakers had to be fluent French speakers. However, it should also be remembered that the use of French is rapidly shrinking, particularly among the young group.

#### DATA AND SAMPLE

The subsample used for our study of the interdental fricatives in Cajun English is taken from the first interview in English of 28 speakers in Eunice, Basil, Mamou,



Source: Alter Waddell

FIGURE 1. Map of southern Louisiana.

and other surrounding towns in St. Landry Parish. The map in Figure 1 shows the four geographical areas in southern Louisiana where the data were collected.

The speakers are almost equally divided by sex (13 females, 15 males) and age (9 young, 10 middle-aged, 9 old). The type of social network that characterizes the speakers' interactions with other people inside and outside of the community shows that 60% of the speakers are members of close-knit networks: that is, the speakers as well as their spouses have always lived and worked in town, they take part in leisure activities in town, and all of their friends live in town. The remaining 40% have more open social networks: that is, they work outside the parish or have a spouse who (or whose family) is not from the parish or perhaps not even from southern Louisiana. In St. Landry, there is a stronger tendency for young women to be members of open networks than for young men. (A similar situation is described by Gal, 1979.)

Another social fact about the speakers to take into account is the speaker's first language, whether English, French, or both French and English. The sub-sample of St. Landry is representative of the entire corpus. The majority of speakers over 40 years old have French as their first language, whereas the young speakers, though fluent in French, tend to have learned English as their first language or, to a lesser extent, were raised using both languages. Unlike

the other parishes in the study, all the young speakers in St. Landry have English as their first language.

#### METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

All words containing (th) and (dh) were coded, but only fully dental variants of [t,d] were analyzed, whether in initial, medial, or final position. Since we were particularly interested in focusing on potential French interference, all realizations other than dental stops, including any intermediate variants such as the affricates [tθ,dð] described by Labov, were coded together with the standard variants. In addition, words in which the fricatives were deleted (*is there* realized as [ˈɪzər]) were not counted. Approximately 96 hours were spent on the transcription; more than 35 hours were devoted to the coding the variables (th) and (dh).

A total of 6,798 tokens were coded for (dh) compared with 1,243 tokens for (th). Some 40% of the realizations of (dh) and 30% of (th) were realized as fully dental [d] and [t]; few occurrences of [f] in final position (*with/wif, both/bof*) were found. Walton (1994) found that (dh) is more frequently stopped than (th), as did Wolfram and Christian (1976:68) in their description of Appalachian English. We found the same pattern in our data, but there was only a slight tendency (10%) for the voiced stop variant to exceed the voiceless stop. Because of the imbalance in the overall distribution of the tokens in the database (85% (dh) compared to 15% (th)), we are inclined to think that the higher frequency of the voiced variable is not linguistically significant.

The linguistic and social factors that were coded included:

1. stress: whether the word containing (th) or (dh) was stressed or unstressed;
2. number of syllables: monosyllabic or polysyllabic;
3. word class: lexical words, function words, or numbers;
4. type of function word: article, *this/that* used as an article, expressions like *that/like this*, prepositions, or pronouns;
5. preceding phonological environment: consonant, vowel, or pause (beginning with finer distinctions such as the type of consonant or vowel);
6. age: old (over 60), middle-aged (40–59), or young (20–39);
7. sex: male or female;
8. social network: closed or open; and
9. initial language learning experience: French, English, or French and English.

The last two factors were included after the original database was constructed. The type of network originally had a four-point scale, but here we combined the three groups with weak ties (open). As mentioned earlier, there are no young speakers who have French as their first language. Thus, the initial learning experience overlaps with the age factors, but only for the younger generation. We do have a number of old and middle-aged men and women in the three initial language learning categories. When we analyzed the influence of this factor with GOLDVARB, the young speakers were removed.

TABLE 1. *Contribution of linguistic and social factors selected as significant to the probability of dental stop realizations of (th) and (dh)*

Factor Group	(th)			(dh)		
	Weight	%	N	Weight	%	N
Function word	.70	41	135/328	.51	41	2514/6187
Lexical word	.43	26	236/915	.37	33	202/611
Old	.64	42	166/394	.67	57	895/2060
Middle-aged	.32	14	61/422	.34	22	556/2517
Young	.55	34	144/427	.51	43	1265/2221
Men	.59	39	250/638	.62	54	1982/3664
Women	.41	20	121/605	.36	23	734/3134
Closed network	.58	38	300/792	.59	51	2238/4428
Open network	.36	16	71/451	.34	20	478/2370

Factors not selected: stress; number of syllables; preceding phonological segment; first language

## RESULTS

The coding of the variables was done using the statistical package Statview, and variable rule analyses were carried out using GOLDVARB, a logistic regression application for the Macintosh (Rand & Sankoff, 1990). Cross-tabulations of factor groups were examined to check for potential interactions and artificial effects. Separate GOLDVARB analyses were performed of the two sounds, but for expository convenience, the results are reported together. However, because the runs were separate, it is important to remember that one cannot define a hierarchy of weights except within either (th) or (dh). The GOLDVARB step-up/step-down analysis selected word class (function or lexical word), age, sex, and social network as significant factor groups. The factor groups rejected by GOLDVARB include stress, number of syllables, preceding phonological environment, and initial language learning experience. The results are presented in Table 1.

Let us examine the distribution of the two sounds in the lexicon of English. Four-fifths of all the data are for the (dh) variable. The distribution across word classes also reflects some major differences between the two sounds: one-third of the tokens in the (th) dataset but nine-tenths of the (dh) tokens are function words. The two variables also have different phonological distributions: (th) can occur initially, medially, or finally, independently of word class. By contrast, the distribution of (dh) is skewed. In function words, the overwhelming majority of (dh) tokens are word-initial, whereas in lexical words, (dh) occurs only in medial and final positions.<sup>3</sup> This unequal distribution of the sounds constrains our ability to sort out some of the linguistic effects on the dental stop variants.



TABLE 2. *Contribution of cross-tabulated social factors selected as significant to the probability of dental stop realizations of (th) and (dh)*

Factor Group	(th)			(dh)		
	Weight	%	N	Weight	%	N
Old						
Men	.68	44	99/223	.71	59	761/1283
Women	.58	39	67/171	.62	54	504/938
Middle-aged						
Men	.37	18	30/169	.51	43	431/1007
Women	.31	12	31/253	.17	8	125/1510
Young						
Men	.71	49	121/246	.68	57	790/1374
Women	.30	13	23/181	.42	15	105/686
Closed network						
Men	.56	38	204/531	.59	54	1610/2959
Women	.70	37	96/261	.67	43	628/1469
Open network						
Men	.59	43	46/107	.51	53	372/705
Women	.25	7	25/344	.22	6	106/1665

The overall incidence of the stop realization of the interdental fricatives clearly indicates that the feature is variable; the stop occurred in approximately one-third of all potential contexts. Function words strongly favor the dental stop for (th) but not for (dh). Contrary to the popular characterization of Cajun speakers as using *dese* and *doz* all of the time, the analysis shows that function words favor neither the interdental fricative nor the dental stop for (dh).

The older generation shows the strongest tendency to use the dental stop, whereas the middle-aged speakers show the lowest tendency. Strikingly, the young generation use more dental stops than the middle-aged speakers. The dental stops are also more likely to be used by men and by speakers who are members of closed rather than open networks. What clearly emerges from this analysis is that the linguistic behavior of the young generation, particularly of the young men, is not typical of a change in progress, where the patterns begun by the old and middle-aged would lead us to expect that the young would continue to decrease their usage of the dental stop. Instead, we see a decided increase in the use of stops for fricatives for the young group as a whole.

In order to determine if the effects of sex are independent of age and network, we reran GOLDVARB using two new factor groups. The first one combines sex and age, whereas the second one combines sex and network. Both the age/sex factor and the network/sex factor were selected as significant by GOLDVARB. Table 2 shows the results of this analysis.

The most striking result is the similarity between the patterns for the use of (th) and (dh), although a few important exceptions are revealed. Let us examine the

TABLE 3. *Percentage of dental stop realizations of (th) and (dh) according to age and sex, split by type of network*

Factor Group	Old		Middle-aged		Young	
	(th)	(dh)	(th)	(dh)	(th)	(dh)
Women						
Closed network	51	65	15	12	35	49
Open network	0	0	11	6	5	8
Men						
Closed network	44	69	19	39	47	55
Open network	46	40	5	64	56	87

age/sex factor group first. We note that the pattern found in Table 1—men use [t,d] more than women—holds in each age group. Table 2 shows that the age pattern—young speakers use more stops than the middle-aged speakers—is also true for [d] for men and women. However, both middle-aged and young women disfavor the use of [t]; only young men favor it. Another pattern worthy of note concerns the young men: they favor the use of the dental stops even more than do the women from the older generation.

Strong patterns emerge from the correlation of sex and network. In the closed networks, contrary to our expectation, women surpass men in the use of both [t] and [d]. We have to look at the open networks to find men who produce more stops than women. Moreover, we find that the network pattern—speakers with closed networks use [t] and [d] more frequently than speakers with open networks—does not hold for men. Men favor stops regardless of the type of network. However, network has a striking impact on the linguistic behavior of the women. Women in closed networks strongly favor the vernacular dental stops even more than do the men in either closed or open networks. Women in open networks exhibit the opposite behavior; they strongly disfavor the vernacular and use the interdental fricative variants.

What Table 2 illustrates is a complex web of strong relationships among the three social factor groups. In order to test the network effects further, we examined the co-occurrence frequencies of the three groups of factors using a symmetric test (contingency tables). We cross-tabulated the age and network factor groups split up by sex. Table 3 presents the results of this analysis in terms of percentages.

Table 3 clearly indicates where the sex differences lie with respect to age and network. Women make no distinction between the (th) and (dh) variants. However, the linguistic behavior of the women with respect to the nonstandard [t] and [d] is clearly differentiated by their social networks. Moreover, the network pattern holds for every age group. The tendency is not as strong for the middle-aged speakers, but, as we have seen, they hardly have any tendency to use the stops at all. Women in closed networks favor the vernacular, whereas women in open networks do not use the vernacular. Figure 2 illustrates the women's use of [t] and [d].

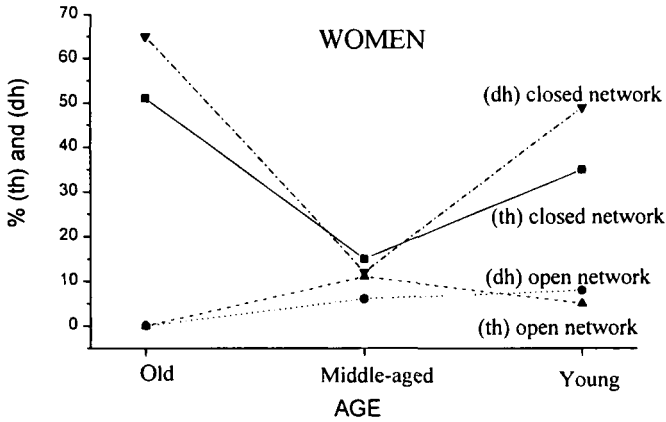


FIGURE 2. Percentage of dental stops in women's speech.

The linguistic behavior of the men with respect to (th) or (dh) is very different for each age group, [d] being more used than [t]. The type of network does not influence the use of [t]. Men of both closed and open social networks follow a v-shaped age pattern. A much more complex pattern of age and network emerges for the [d] variant. Men in closed social networks follow the v-shaped age pattern, but men in open networks behave totally unlike any of the other patterns that we found. In fact, for men in open networks, there is a strong, steady increase (from 40% to 64% to 87%) of [d] across the generations from old to young. The linguistic behavior of the men is illustrated by Figure 3.

The most striking sex difference in the use of (th) and (dh) is found for the open network speakers, where men and women behave in complete opposition. Women reject the use of both [t] and [d] regardless of age. For [t] men follow the v-shaped age pattern of those speakers with closed networks, but in the case of [d] middle-aged and young men with open networks strongly push its use forward. Notice that the pattern found in Table 2—young men use more dental stop variants than do older women—is no longer true when network is taken into consideration. However, young men with open networks use [d] not only more often than do older women, but also more often than do older men.

DISCUSSION

We turn now to our interpretations of these patterns related to age, sex, and network. In particular, we examine the external conditions favoring the emergence of these patterns within the Cajun community. More precisely we seek to explain what is behind the v-shaped age pattern; why women with open social networks do not participate in this process; and why men use the vernacular (dh) variant so much more than do women.

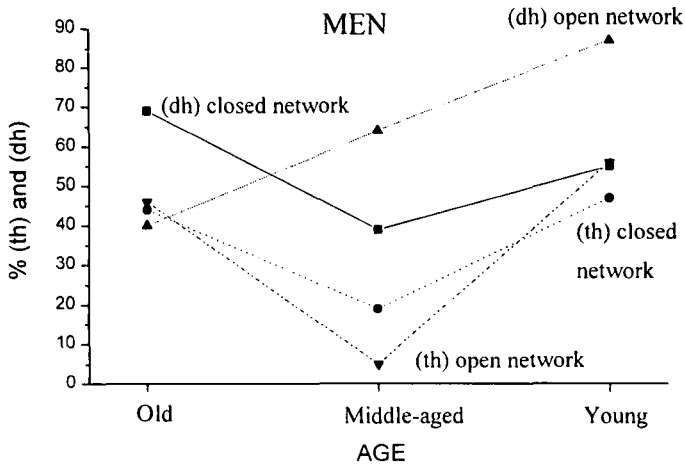


FIGURE 3. Percentage of dental stops in men's speech.

In order to interpret the sociolinguistic patterns we found for the vernacular dental stop realization of (th) and (dh), we turn to the Cajun identity study conducted in 1996 and discussed in detail in Dubois (1997a) and Dubois and Melançon (1997). This study is of crucial importance for our present purposes.<sup>4</sup> Its primary purpose was to “scientifically control the interpretation of the linguistic behavior of Cajun speakers” (Dubois & Melançon, 1997:69).

Dubois and Melançon showed that a great deal of external social change has affected the Cajun communities. Several urbanization and industrialization factors, as well as legislation in 1921 which established English as the only official language in Louisiana (converting the educational system from French to English), fostered the assimilation of Cajuns into the Anglo-dominant culture (see also Ancelet, 1988; Brown, 1993). Moreover, the Cajun way of life, which was alien and disturbing to unenlightened outsiders, was heavily stigmatized. Shifting from French to English was one way for Cajuns to attenuate the stigma for themselves and especially for their children.

All these factors contributed to a dramatic decrease in the number of Cajun French speakers and to the loss of French as an important symbol of Cajun identity. The survey found that 78% did not believe that having French as a first language was important to being Cajun, and 58% of all respondents said that it was not necessary to be able to speak French at all. In addition three-quarters of the respondents did not think it was important to live in a Cajun town or even to live in Louisiana. For a small number of people, mainly those younger people who knew no French, a kind of *joie de vivre* was the only attribute they associated with being Cajun. In sum, the preservation of French was not considered by Cajuns to be vital to the survival of the Cajun community.<sup>5</sup>

The study suggested that fluent middle-aged speakers were the most reluctant to declare themselves Cajun compared with the old and young groups. “This

distinctive behavior can be partially ascribed to the stigmatization of Cajun French in the forties, fifties, and sixties. These individuals reached adulthood during a period when Cajun identity (language and culture) was heavily denigrated, which is no longer the case for those between 20 and 40 years of age . . . it is the middle-aged group which suffered most from the political, cultural, and social climate of their youth” (Dubois & Melançon, 1997:80–81, 89).

By contrast, the young, fluent French speakers more strongly identified as Cajuns than the older generation did. This behavior is explained by an increase in the socioeconomic status of Cajuns, which has brought along with it an increase in respect for all things Cajun, a phenomenon that has been called the Cajun renaissance (Waddell, 1993:237). The study showed that fluent Cajun French speakers tended to belong to a higher social class, and that their socioeconomic security engendered favorable attitudes from Cajuns and non-Cajuns alike towards Cajun identity. As Dubois and Melançon (1997:86) pointed out:

Cajun culture has acquired a definite cachet, [which] means that as far as the younger group of respondents is concerned, to admit or even to flaunt this identity no longer has the negative social or economic connotations experienced by the previous generations. Rather than having to hide or disguise Cajun identity, the younger generation takes pride in its heritage and the stigmatization attached to the label “Cajun” has greatly diminished.

The v-shaped age pattern suggests that the younger generation has dramatically increased the use of the vernacular so that their use of the interdental fricative is nearly as high as that of their grandparents. This behavior reflects the attitudes of the young age group towards Cajun identity. Our argument, then, is that this phonological feature, along with a number of other linguistic features, serves the same function as does French language use—namely, to express “Cajun identity.” Since the Cajun renaissance is shared by all Louisianans and many outside of Louisiana, it is now socially advantageous to show that you are Cajun. However, for the young generation, if Cajun identity is to be signaled by language, then it is to be done in English as the majority of young speakers interact most of the time with outsiders as well as with their immediate family members in English. They tend to use French only with some of their extended family members.

Another factor mentioned briefly by Dubois and Melançon (1997) is particularly relevant for the St. Landry subsample and could have accelerated the “Cajun” variants of (th) and (dh) among the young population. Being Cajun is now economically advantageous, primarily because St. Landry has become a focus of the tourist industry. This parish and surrounding areas are well-known for the celebration of Cajun culture through music, dance, and food. Every Saturday night, there is a Cajun get-together (*rendez-vous des Cadiens*), during which music and dancing are presented on stage. There are dancehalls where Cajun “experts” teach Cajun dancing, and there are well-known restaurants serving typical Cajun food and providing opportunities for dancing and music. It is a well-known “secret” that the best and most authentic *boudin* in southwestern Louisiana can be bought around Eunice. Cajun band members, the majority of

whom are young men, play and sing Cajun French songs, having learned the lyrics by heart because they do not know French. On Sunday mornings in Eunice, it is hard to get a parking place because so many people have come to attend a music session at a music shop, where people gather to eat *boudin* and crackers and to listen to old Cajun fiddlers and accordionists. Mamou is famous for its celebration of Mardi Gras,<sup>6</sup> characterized by such traditions as young Cajun men chasing chickens or riding horses around town to gather the ingredients for making a gumbo. English-speaking tourists from all over Louisiana as well as from outside of the state come to experience all of this. As Waddell (1993:250) pointed out, "French Louisiana has become eminently visible beyond its frontiers, and Cajun culture has become a marketable commodity."

What is the sociolinguistic impact of the economic advantage of displaying your culture to tourists? It not only makes the loss of the French language seem less important, but also makes the use of English seem more productive because the positive feelings toward being Cajun can be shared with people who do not speak French. In addition, the display of the culture is commercially beneficial to some.<sup>7</sup> Presenting Cajun culture to outsiders means that English must carry the Cajun identity load.

Our hypothesis predicted that the English of the older generation, who learned French first or who used French for a wide variety of functions, would be most affected by the interference, and that the stop variants of (th) and (dh) would decrease in the middle-aged group and would be further reduced in the speech of the young, who grew up in English-only nuclear families and learned French as a second language from members of their extended families. For the older generation, we would suggest that the stop substitutions are part of their accented English, but that these stops are only one of a number of characteristics distinguishing their variety of accented English. However, the stop substitutions by the young generation, given their language learning and language use patterns, has to be interpreted in another way. For the younger generation, being Cajun has become socially and economically advantageous, and so they take pride in their Cajun identity. But because the functional load of the ancestral language has been significantly reduced to speaking French only to the older people in their extended family domain, they signal their Cajun identity through English. The stops in the speech of the young group are identity markers, not accented English.

Let us now consider why women in open networks appear to ignore the Cajun renaissance that is reflected in this language process, whereas men in open networks participate strongly in it. The older generation were more or less the first generation forced to go to school in English. The social characteristics of the Dubois study of attitudes toward being Cajun indicate that girls stayed at school longer, and that the boys left to work on the farms. It may be that the women, perhaps being more sensitive to the social evaluation of speech, are a generation ahead. That is, what we see for the linguistic behavior of the middle-aged men began a generation earlier with women. This must remain speculation until other data demonstrate clearly that an even older generation of women used more of the vernacular.

One effect of having an open network, certainly for women younger than 60, could be that assimilation into the Anglophone population is accelerated. Having an open network means traveling and working outside of the community, socializing with non-family members, and possibly marrying outside of the Cajun community as well as living outside of the parish for a period of time. Women in closed networks spend most of their time at home and are in complete charge of house, children, and relationships with the extended family; they pride themselves on their cooking and handicrafts. To participate in an open network, then, means to reject the core traditional values within the Cajun community. Being linguistically sensitive because of education and their access to the outsider community, women in open networks appear not to identify linguistically as Cajuns. However, it would be misleading to suggest that they do not participate in the Cajun cultural revival, given their fluency in Cajun French. However, it may be that these women do not use English as an identity tool to keep the world of English and the world of French distinct. This explanation is of course valid only for (th) and (dh) as Cajun markers. Ongoing sociolinguistic studies concerning other markers (e.g., monophthongal realization of /ay/, vowel nasalization, non-aspiration of /p,t,k/) will show to what extent this interpretation is well-founded. Our expectation is that similar results will be found for several stereotypical Cajun sociolinguistic variables.<sup>8</sup>

What explanation is there for the fact that men with open networks use [d] much more than do women? It is likely that this sex marker has existed in the Cajun community from the older generation down to the young. In other words, men may have always shown the tendency to use [d] within the Cajun community. If this explanation is correct, it means that men with open networks are simply behaving like men. However, for the middle-aged and young generations [d] takes on a double meaning: not only is it the male marker, but it is coupled with a Cajun identity. Notice the striking increase in the use of the vernacular variant by young Cajun men in open networks. Our suggestion is that for women [d] (which is the most frequent variant) is only a marker of Cajun identity, but for men it is a sex and an identity marker.

The identity pattern, therefore, is not purely based on sex: women in closed networks and men in both closed and open networks are part of the sociolinguistic pattern. Nevertheless, a distinction is maintained between the sexes in the case of (dh). The display of Cajun culture, by its very nature oriented to outsiders, is in the hands of men (music, cuisine, annual festivities, hunting, fishing). This is particularly true of the middle-aged and young men, and it is therefore not difficult to understand why it is men in open networks who are leading the change of a variable that is recognized as a stereotype.

#### NOTES

1. In accord with standard practice in sociolinguistics, we use virgules when representing phonemes, parentheses when representing sociolinguistic variables, and brackets to indicate the phonetic realization of the variable.

2. Dobson (1957), cited in Ó hÚrdail (1997:145), also reported hypercorrection (e.g., *cannot* pronounced *cannoth*).
3. The question left open here is whether position in word is significant for dental stop realization. There is no way to sort this out for (dh) for the reasons already discussed. However, we can examine the data for (th) in more detail using the finer word classes initially coded, because the voiceless dental fricative occurs in all three positions in all word classes. Since our results indicate that the function class strongly favors the dental stop, let us compare the preposition with the pronoun sub-categories of the function word class. The preposition factor contains many instances of the token *with*, where (th) is in final position. Half of the tokens are realized with /th/ and half with a dental stop. In the case of pronouns, represented by *both*, in which the (th) occurs in final position, only 14% of the tokens have a dental realization. This shows that it is not final position that determines whether [t] will be used. Instead, there is something about the lexical class that is important. Perhaps we need to sort out the function words more carefully in the future, but the decreasing number of lexical items in the class means that one is soon reduced to a comparison of individual words.
4. St. Landry Parish was one of four communities included. Dubois and Melançon (1997) showed that place of residence has no influence on the attitudes toward Cajun identity, and their results are therefore valid for our subsample.
5. See Dubois (1997a) for further details regarding methodology and (Dubois 1997b) for attitudes towards teaching and learning Cajun French.
6. Mardi Gras is a celebration that the older people now complain about, claiming that it has changed from the old days.
7. As one Cajun remarked to Dubois during the fieldwork, "If French is good for business, I'll send my kids to learn French." This statement is consistent with one made by the head of the Lafayette Tourist Commission, who was quoted in the *New York Times* (November 23, 1997) as saying, "We're happy to promote everybody and everything as long as it helps the tourist business."
8. The effect of sex on the emergence and sociolinguistic structure of Cajun English is more complex than we are able to deal with here and is part of our ongoing research.

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