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WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Linguistics Program

**Bolstering Hyde's *Basic French Conversations I & II*
as a Resource for Missouri French Dialect Learning**

by

Henry R. Greenstein

A thesis presented to the
Linguistics Program
of Washington University in
partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
degree of Bachelor of Arts
with honors

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Abstract

This paper features an analysis of the linguistic features of the Missouri French dialect, such as vocabulary, syntax, and phonology, and specifically how they are presented by Hyde in her *Basic French Conversations I & II: Lessons 1-8*. The ultimate goal is to bolster Hyde's textbook's effectiveness as a dialect teaching tool by providing additional context from other Missouri French academic works, studies of separate French dialects such as Louisiana French, and personal research. The project begins with an overview of the sparse linguistic and cultural inquiry that preceded Hyde's textbook, then recaps the circumstances that led to Hyde teaching a Missouri French class in the town of Old Mines in the late 1970s. The rest of the analysis consists of eight sections, one per lesson, each featuring broad linguistic trends featured in the lesson, specific vocabulary words with explanations, and a miscellaneous glossary. The analysis touches on a wide variety of dialectal characteristics, from the assibilation of dental stops before front vowels to the addition of [j] in subjunctive forms. Throughout, the project highlights subjects crucial to the history of Missouri French, such as the challenges of formalizing a written work about a chiefly spoken language, the relative influences of languages from English to Spanish to Myaamia and dialects from Canada to Louisiana, and the lack of diachronic analysis in most studies. The thesis concludes with a discussion of dialectal characteristics that are unattested in *Basic French Conversations* and touches briefly on the current cultural awareness of Missouri French.

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Abbreviations

1: first-person
2: second-person
3: third-person
F: feminine
FUT: future tense
IMPERF: imperfect tense
M: masculine
MOF: “Missouri French”
PL: plural [noun]
PRES: present tense
SBJV: subjunctive mood
SF: “Standard French”
SG: singular [noun]

1 Introduction

1.1 Dialect Research History

A mere 90 years ago, the modern academic history of the Missouri French dialect began in earnest when, on a tip from a student, Miami University's Miller decided to travel to the region in southeastern Missouri "bounded on the north by De Soto and on the south by Potosi, with a width of some fifteen miles" (Miller 1930:174). There in the Ozarks, he undertook wide-ranging research into the obscure French-speaking population of the town of Old Mines, ultimately leading to his publication of the paper "Missouri's 'Paw-Paw' French." The article, featured in *The French Review*, features a broad ethnographic account of the endemic Franco-American culture that constituted one of the first even vaguely linguistic inquiries into their esoteric dialect (nicknamed "Paw-Paw French" after a native fruit tree). But as early as he was, Miller found that the local tongue had already fallen deeply into decline. "The children do not speak any French at all, and with the passing of the present generation I fear that the dialect will be gone, or practically so," he reported (Miller 1930:175).

Miller contributed some surface-level but deeply inauspicious sociolinguistic observations. About 2,000 Missouri French people inhabited the region. Their dialect was purely spoken in nature, yet they were reluctant to converse in it at all and potentially risk the ire of their English-speaking, French-demeaning peers. When they did speak, their language was full of anglicisms, intended to fill gaps created by modern technology that hadn't been present back when the French controlled huge swaths of North America and

planted the seeds for the dialect in the first place. Without more written research, the unique language variety would fade completely.

The French language had arrived in Missouri as part of France's colonial expansion down from early Québec via the Mississippi River. Jacques Marquette and Louis Joliet's search for the Northwest Passage, an alleged water route connecting the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, led them on a meandering route as far south as modern Arkansas, demarcating the boundaries of what eventually became French Louisiana. But before it was Louisiana, it was *le pays des Illinois*, 'the Illinois Country,' with centers of French power — and by extension, language and culture — along the river in Kaskaskia and Ste. Genevieve. Soon, forced inland by inhibitory grain price ceilings in Kaskaskia, settlers discovered sizable lead and galena deposits in the Ozarks (Baldo 2012). Once Philippe François Renault obtained a grant to mine these valuable metals, the group founded what would eventually become the village of Old Mines (Thompson, n.d.).

Over the next two centuries, northern settlements faltered as southern ones flourished, and so the balance of power shifted in French North America. The already-faltering Kaskaskia was destroyed by floods; meanwhile, even as a brief, tumultuous period of Spanish rule in Louisiana put French cultural superiority in jeopardy, rising shipping outpost New Orleans was bolstered by waves of Francophone and Catholic migration from Acadia and Haiti ("The Creole City," n.d, citing Brasseaux 1990 and Hall 1992; LaBorde, n.d.). This southern French infrastructure would be strong enough to survive the 1803 Louisiana Purchase, when the entire territory was sold to the United States. But to the north, Ste. Genevieve's French culture would not withstand the

successive immigrations of English and German speakers; Germans became a majority in the town by the Civil War (Weiser 2017). Even in the linguistic isolation of Old Mines, the ensuing decades brought the harsh stigmatization of French that Miller witnessed when he visited the region. Children were severely disciplined in school for the slightest whisper of a dialect that most of society came to consider backward and ignorant (Filliez 2017).¹

Thankfully, the 1930s and early 1940s yielded a veritable treasure trove of linguistic research into Missouri French — though anything would have constituted a windfall compared to what little had come before. First came Dorrance’s *The Survival of French in the Old District of Sainte Genevieve* (1935), a densely detailed glossary featuring etymological specifics, sample sentences, and even some phonological analysis. It would be shortly followed by the trailblazing work of Carrière, a Northwestern instructor of French Canadian origin fresh off a doctorate in Romance philology from Harvard. Beginning in 1934, Carrière went to Old Mines for several summers to compile what became by default the largest Missouri French corpus in existence, his *Tales from the French folk-lore of Missouri* (1937), a transcription of 73 traditional folktales from Old Mines and the surrounding area, which he had also recorded on wax cylinders (Thompson 2019, citing Bénéteau 2005).² Carrière briefly discussed some dialectal features in the introduction to his *Tales*, but he redoubled his efforts in successive years with the more explicitly analytical *Creole Dialect of Missouri* (1939) and *The Phonology*

¹ Further evidence describing the historical circumstances surrounding the Missouri French dialect can be found at <https://red439.wixsite.com/missourifrench>.

² Henceforth, these will be referred to as “Carrière’s folktales” or a variant thereof.

of Missouri French: A Historical Study (1941). These papers helped capture dialectal phenomena in significantly greater detail than Miller and even Dorrance had.

But one component these trenchant works lacked was consistency, especially in the folktales. The problem of Missouri French's purely spoken modality, as first noted by Miller, seemingly plagued Carrière in particular, as his transcriptions make an effort to mimic Standard French orthography, but end up rather erratic due to the unavoidable issues of intra- and inter-speaker variability (Rosemary Hyde, pers. comm.). Meanwhile, Dorrance's spellings were more regular, but his work was narrower.

Therefore, while Carrière's tales were invaluable in capturing phonology, they could not completely serve as an educational tool for future researchers and, perhaps more importantly, potential language learners, especially not without translations. The next major addition to the literature, Thogmartin's 1970 dissertation, used word-list-based sociolinguistic interviews to capture more dialectal vocabulary, but avoided the transcription issue entirely by either quoting spellings directly from Carrière or using the International Phonetic Alphabet. Thogmartin did not enact a consistent orthography; as such, a generation after Carrière's work, it would take the efforts of Hyde to create a text truly suitable for language preservation and future learning.³

Hyde had spent several years in France, and her background was in psycholinguistics. She was first introduced to Missouri French through Missouri Friends of the Folk Arts, a mid-70s, St. Louis-based organization with an emphasis on regional

³ Based on our personal communication (via telephone on November 6, 2019), she currently goes by Rosemary Hyde. For clarity, and since it is the name under which she published her original works, she will be referred to as Hyde in prose and Thomas in citations except for in reference to our recent conversations.

music and storytelling. The plight of “linguistic orphans” in Old Mines, who had come to disdain their own language and culture, intrigued her deeply. One of her principal goals was teaching a class in the dialect to aid these orphans, who were becoming increasingly detached from their ancestors’ unique culture. She knew that with the dialect’s dire state, she wouldn’t have long to, as she puts it, “snatch what [she could] from the jaws of death” (Rosemary Hyde, pers. comm.).

So she set about formulating the class and the best possible educational materials in the summer of 1977, relying on interviews with “about thirty-five individuals” for whom “French, at one time, had been the primary language,” and building consensus to choose the appropriate variants in cases of ambiguity, leaning on Standard French conventions when in doubt (Thomas 1981:vi). When the class then began in the fall, it was with the aid of *Basic French Conversations I & II: Lessons 1-8* (1978), a comprehensive, introductory resource the likes of which Missouri French had never known. Hyde followed it with *Some aspects of the French language and culture of Old Mines, Missouri* (1979), which not only possessed the academic and linguistic rigor of Dorrance, Carrière, and Thogmartin before her, but also featured a detailed meta-description of the pedagogical process of establishing her class. The final installment in this classic trilogy, as it were, of essential Old Mines texts is *It’s Good to Tell You: French Folktales from Missouri* (1981), a translation project for 21 selected Carrière folktales that arose directly from her French class, as she leveraged the unique expertise of her students and interviewees to tackle an ambitious and edifying task. This wide-ranging series of works is the most comprehensive illustration of the sociolinguistic traits

of Old Mines French, and, as Hyde predicted, it's been pretty much the last language-centered study (although many have written about the culture more broadly). So the Old Mines Area Historical Society still sells copies of *Basic French Conversations* at its annual *fête*, and for good reason; it applies classic teaching methods, familiar to anyone who's ever taken a French class, to an unfamiliar, often puzzling dialect.

1.2 Project Background and Description

I purchased a copy of the book when I first visited Old Mines in 2017. At the time, there was even less information on the Internet about the Missouri dialect then than there is now, in 2020. By all accounts, the dialect now teeters on the verge of extinction (although it's certainly outlasted Miller's projections), with a 30-speaker estimate reported several years ago (Filliez 2017). A flurry of 2015 news articles centered on a couple of young language enthusiasts in St. Louis, Nathanael Alire and Brandon Curry, who had attempted to start classes of their own, as Illinois Country French Preservation Inc., with the bold goal of resuscitating the language. By 2017, their Facebook page had seemingly gone inactive, and the ambitious project appeared, at least for the moment, dead in the water. But here, right at the source, I found a simple yet revelatory text with telling pronunciation guides and, by and large, comprehensible orthography.

However, some key components of the dialect escaped me, only because I lacked the additional context I would have gained from actually participating in the class 40 years earlier. Some vocabulary words, such as a variety of flora and fauna, were presented without sufficient commentary in the textbook for me to determine their

meaning.⁴ The dialect's patterns of verb conjugation were so simple, in their reduced number of endings, as to become confusing. And even when Hyde explained a grammatical phenomenon explicitly via instructions in the textbook — take the startling *ma t'êt'* near-future construction (2.6.1) — I wanted to know more explicitly why it was the way it was.

Sometimes, this elusive “why” could be found in *Some aspects*. Other times, I would need to make a trip to Carrière or Dorrance. On occasion, I would need to consider another related North American French dialect, like those of Québec and Louisiana, for context. And from time to time, I would strike out completely. But throughout, I couldn't help but think that as incredible a resource as *Basic French Conversations* was, I could make it even more useful by combining loads of extant research with some original takes and connections.

As such, my goal is for this project to serve as a comprehensive companion to that textbook. In the following text, I proceed lesson by lesson, first considering broad phonological and grammatical trends, then analyzing individual vocabulary words. I bring in information from all the different sources listed above, with a particular emphasis on the Carrière folktales and their Hyde translations, plus comparisons to similar French dialects. The text that follows is not a complete list of every single characteristic of the Missouri French dialect; rather, it interpolates key elements that shed light on the more obscure portions of *Basic French Conversations*.

⁴ As Dorrance (1935) notes, just by nature of being on a separate continent from France, Missouri French and other North American dialects have had to innovate a lot of words for novel plants and animals. It's unsurprising that the dialect shares a lot of its “natural” words with Louisiana French, the most geographically proximate variety of French.

A generation after Carrière, Hyde sought to make Old Mines French more accessible to the town's own residents, and she certainly succeeded. Another 40 years have passed, and I hope that, at least working within the constraints of a senior thesis, I can expand the study of the dialect even further with this analysis.

2 The Basic French Conversations Companion

Because of the purely spoken nature of Missouri French (MOF), and the irregularities of Carrière, Hyde had to formalize her own spelling system without too much help from historical studies of the dialect, though she did take some inspiration from the clearer spellings of Dorrance 1935 (Rosemary Hyde, pers. comm.). In compiling the textbook, Hyde makes many deliberate orthographical and lexical choices, building consensus among her informants to determine the most suitable items for teaching. As such, the reader can learn a great deal about the dialect writ large from subtle differences in spelling, syntax, and such, many of which become apparent immediately.

2.1 Lesson 1: Ma famille et moué (1)

2.1.1 [wa] versus [wɛ]/[we]/[e] (Ma famille et moué) (1)

One of the most significant and widely attested phonological differences in MOF as compared to Standard French (SF) is visible in the lesson's title.⁵ Where SF has [a] following [w] in words like *moi*, the Missouri dialect displays [e] and [ɛ] realizations of the vowel. These had actually remained prestige variants in SF until the French Revolution, and therefore would have lasted in the linguistic isolation of Old Mines (Carrière 1941b; see also Millar & Trask 2013). This vowel difference manifests in both stressed and unstressed syllables. Examples of these differences — MOF *bonsouère* (SF

⁵ Not technically visible, as Hyde capitalizes lesson titles. But the *moué* spelling appears elsewhere, as in *Moué, je commence à venir lasse* ('I'm starting to get tired'), on page 107.

bonsoir, ‘good night’), *vouésin(e)* (SF *voisin(e)*, ‘neighbor’), *parouésse* (SF *paroisse*, ‘parish’) — are distributed throughout Lesson 1 and the rest of the text (1, 4, 8).⁶

As the varying accent marks imply, exactly what vowel corresponds to SF [a], and in which context, is inconsistent throughout the dialectal literature. Dorrance (1935), for instance, almost categorically employed [ɛ]. Hyde, on the other hand, opts for the *accent acute* after [w], signifying [e], except in two sets of circumstances. For one, Hyde uses the *accent grave*, and by extension [ɛ], when the vowel precedes /r/. This environment occurs most frequently in common infinitives like MOF *aouère* (SF *avoir*, ‘to have’) and *ouère* (SF *voir*, ‘to see’) (17, 59). Secondly, in other cases, the preceding [w] is deleted entirely, producing words such as MOF *seye* (SF *soit*, ‘be.3SG.SBJV’), *netteyer* (SF *nettoyer*, ‘to clean’), and *frétte* (SF *froid*, ‘cold’) (42, 93, 63).⁷

To evaluate Hyde’s vowel choices, we might consider evidence from related dialects. But where to start? With the exception of Thogmartin (1970), researchers of MOF have assessed the dialect as most linguistically similar to Canadian French. For instance, Vézina (2005) found that in his constructed MOF corpus, more than three-quarters of MOF words directly corresponded to or at least had evolved from Canadian forms. Therefore, it is unsurprising that Hyde’s phonological distinctions at least somewhat match the corresponding vowel difference as it appears in Canadian French, at least according to Walker (1984). However, some notable discrepancies exist between the two. Walker assigned a lengthened [we:] to the pre-[r] tokens. Also, in a glaring

⁶ For the sake of clarity and concision, these unauthored page numbers will be used to cite examples from within *Basic French Conversations*, so as to avoid repeatedly writing Thomas 1978:1, 4, 8.

⁷ In the case of *seye*, it’s worth noting that this insertion of [j] denotes the subjunctive mood, a unique MOF touch that I’ll return to in section 2.3.1 on *vaille* and [j] subjunctives (Thogmartin 1970).

difference, his categories of words sorted under [we] and [ε] appear to have [we] or [e] in MOF, including *fréte*.⁸ But generally, this increased prevalence of [e] over [ε] in Missouri can be attributed to another widespread vowel shift, [ε] tensing (2.1.2).

2.1.2 [ε] tensing (J'm'appelle...) (1)

The spelling of SF *appelle* ('is_called.3SG.PRES') as MOF *appelle* indicates an [e] rather than [ε] realization of the /e/ phoneme in stressed syllables before [l]. Throughout the textbook, Hyde also deploys this accent mark in words such as *réste* (SF *reste*, 'stay.1SG') and *lunettes* (SF *lunettes*, 'glasses') (3, 20), where the vowel occurs before [s] and [t], so it might be tempting to generalize to coronal consonants.

However, while Carrière (1941a) did note [se:j] for [sε:j] (SF *sèche*, 'dry.F'), he also observed the process taking place in pre-velar contexts such as [sɛk] / [sek] (SF *sec*, 'dry.M') and [ɛgl] / [egl] (SF *aigle*, 'eagle') that don't appear in Hyde's work. And again he contextualized these as the preservation of an antiquated French pronunciation that started to fall out of favor in the 17th century.

Regardless of its scope, the most important consequence of this pronunciation difference is the unpredictability of the third-person singular feminine pronoun (SF *elle*), which has been a subject of much confusion in the MOF literature. Pronounced [ɛl] in SF, it has varyingly been reported as [el] (consistent with the above pattern), the further-removed [al] (especially before vowels), or even [a] before consonants (Dorrance 1935; Thogmartin 1970). Hyde presents the middle model, spelled *alle*, throughout her text (6).

⁸ Canadian French speakers perceive the dialectal *fréte*, albeit with [ε] rather than [e] (see below), as an intensified version of *froid*, and so the two variants are in some way semantically distinct. There is some basis for this relationship in MOF as well, as iced tea is labeled *thé frette* in Lesson 7 (95).

2.1.3 *C'est* as question marker + interrogative changes (Comme *C'est ça va?*) (1)

In SF, the phrase *est-ce que* (lit. 'is it that') is treated as a sort of all-purpose question signifier of middling formality that can be stuck at the beginning of a sentence to turn it into a yes-or-no question, without any additional syntax restructuring necessary. It can also be used in conjunction with a *wh*-question word. While the latter usage is much older, the former first appeared in the 16th century, making it easily old enough to theoretically appear in the French of Old Mines (Waltereit 2018).

Indeed, in Carrière's collected folktales, the classic SF structure popped up now and again: *Est-ce qu'vous dzira qu'on s'mariera pas à c't heure, princesse?* means 'Are you going to say that we're not getting married now, princess?' (Thomas 1981:105). But this appearance may be a bit of storytelling embellishment, because throughout Hyde's more conversational text, *c'est* alone is sufficient to turn a sentence into a question: *C'est vous les as faits?* ('You made them?') (91). She conjectures now that the people who originally told the tales had a more extensive command of traditional French grammatical structures than their descendents, who have simply passed them down by memorization (what she calls an "impoverishment" of the dialect), hence the presence of more formal or standard French than appears in a typical modern Missouri sample (Rosemary Hyde, pers. comm.).⁹

Looking beyond *c'est*, the arsenal of question words in MOF is fundamentally similar to that of SF, but with several key semantic shifts. For one, *comment*, which

⁹ Indeed, she heard the stories told on numerous occasions even by non-French speakers who had also learned them by rote.

means ‘how’ in SF, instead signifies ‘how many’ (SF *combien*) and can appear in apparent calques such as *Comment vieux?* (lit. ‘How old?’) (2). The ‘how’ void is filled in turn by *comme c’est*, as we see in Lesson 1. In another prominent eradication of *est-ce que*, MOF *quoi c’est* appears both instead of SF *qu’est-ce que* and as a relative pronoun, although in keeping with its grammatical simplification, relative constructions are few and far between in MOF (Dorrance 1935).

However, *est-ce que* does appear, albeit obliquely, in one last form of MOF question. Instead of SF *où* (‘where’), MOF has the unique *squé* — or at least it did by 1978 (35). This proves to be one of the most salient examples of historical change in the dialect, as Carrière’s folktales show the word in the midst of contracting from SF *où est-ce que* — *Ousque vous va, ma grand-mère?* means ‘Where are you going, my grandmother?’ (Thomas 1981:76).

Finally, in perhaps the most rigorous effect, the subject-verb inversion fundamental to SF, a classic instance of main verb V-to-T-to-C movement in syntactic theory, vanishes entirely from MOF. The basic MOF question *Queul âge j’ai?* (SF *quel âge ai-je*, ‘how old am I’) exemplifies this trend (8).¹⁰

2.1.4 Pre-high affrication (“ah-pray-mee-dzee”) (1)

Hyde only includes pronunciation guides for her first four lessons, as she determined through actually teaching her course that by that point most students no longer required them. When they are available, though, they provide some deeply valuable information to

¹⁰ It also demonstrates an infrequent vowel shift from [ɛ] to [ø] or [œ] in some pre-approximant contexts, such as MOF *meume* for SF *même* in the Carrière folktales (Thomas 1981:62). This subject will again be relevant in my later discussion of *queud’chose* (2.3.2).

the puzzled post-1979 learner.¹¹ In these first few sentences, for instance, we can observe how the transcription of *comme* as “Kohm” (1) corresponds to Carrière’s (1941a:415) claim that its “denasalization is not yet complete.”

However, the most intriguing pronunciation difference, a robust dialectal variant, is the affrication of dental stops [t] and [d], which is generally accepted to take place before high vowels [i], [y], and (much later in the book) [u].¹² The affrication process has been generally contextualized as “assibilation,” with the stops assuming a [+strident] feature (Walker 1984). One of the quintessential features of Canadian French and a reasonably common occurrence in Louisiana, this could straightforwardly be attributed to migration down from Canada (as in Hull 1979) if not for its presence in Haiti and even Mauritius, where it varies with palatalization (Hall 1957; Ledgeway & Maiden 2016).

2.1.5 Changes to vous forms (Vous réste) (3)

The *vous* verb form’s SF morphology is virtually eradicated from spoken MOF outside of storytelling. Instead, when *vous* refers to a singular, formal entity, it is followed by the traditional third-person singular form. When *vous* would describe multiple people, it uses the third-person plural — and becomes *vous aut’* (i.e. *vous autres*, lit. ‘you others’) (Thogmartin 1970). This compound pronoun is also reflected in first- and third-person counterparts *nous aut’* and *eux aut’* and is a hallmark of Canadian and Louisiana French

¹¹ At this point I would like to credit another pronunciation resource that was very useful to me: the IPA transcriptions featured on Wikimedia’s Wiktionary, which helped me compare SF and MOF pronunciations at various points in the thesis.

¹² Thogmartin (1970) reported an instance of [dz] before the glide [j] as well, although this brings the process into conflict with a palatalization I’ll discuss shortly (see *méquier* in 2.1.11).

dialects (see e.g. LaFleur & Forkner 2005), in addition to appearing in other Romance languages such as Spanish, which has *nosotros* and *vosotros*.

If the verb form following *vous* starts with a vowel, it takes on an *l'* prefix (e.g. *vous l'est* on page 6), perhaps emulating the third-person subject pronouns. By preventing the formation of a [z] liaison, this affixation further complicates MOF's puzzling relationship with SF final consonants (see e.g. my entries for *neuf* and *n'onc'* in **2.1.11** and the future of *êt'* in **2.6.1**).

2.1.6 [t] suffixation (Oui, j'réste icitte) (3)

Some SF words with a final, silent *t* have it pronounced in MOF, like *nuitte* (SF *nuit*, 'night') or *litte* (SF *lit*, 'bed') (64, 77). But MOF overgeneralizes, affixing a [t] to words like SF *aussi* ('also') or *ici* ('here') where there previously was none, resulting in *aussitte* and *icitte* (64, 3). Although the latter appears in other North American dialects as well (Walker 1984), it has become perhaps the most iconic MOF word, featured in the Old Mines Historical Society slogan *On est toujours icitte!* ('We are still here!').¹³

Judging from the above data, it would be easy to assume a phonological rule inserting [t] between [i] and a word boundary. In fact, previous research has challenged this easy assumption. Carrière (1941b) and Löfstedt (1985) chose instead to consider the realization of orthographic SF *t* as just one of a diverse array of examples of a final consonant being pronounced in MOF, along with words like *gensse* (SF *gens*, 'people') (on page 104 of Thomas's text, too). This is a habit retained from pre-16th century

¹³ House and Corbett (1970) contended that in Canadian French, the widespread pronunciation of final consonants that explains this phenomenon in Louisiana (and, in our case, Missouri) does not apply, so there must be an alternative explanation. They hypothesized that in the medieval French of Western France, *isit* and *ausit* both arose from a conflict between different variants of the nascent SF *ainsi*, and eventually became associated with *ici* and *aussi*, in which forms they were transported to Canada.

French, when final consonants had not yet become typically silent. Another complication of the [t]-suffixation rule is Hyde's claim that the [t] forms appear only in "stressed position" within sentences (Thomas 1979). Although she offers no unstressed examples in her textbook, the Carrière folktales showed a distinction between comparative *aussi*, as in *i' va eurv'nir aussi bon qu'ja-mais* ('he will return as good as ever') (Thomas 1981:30) versus 'also'-signifying *aussite*, as in *j'ai loin à aller, moïn aussite* ('I too have to go far') (Thomas 1981:76). Clearly, the [t] does not get inserted in all sentential positions.

2.1.7 Mandatory subject topicalization (Jean c'est le mari à Rose) (3)

Pretty much every declarative sentence with a third-person subject in *Basic French Conversations* replaces it with an appropriate pronoun and displaces the original subject to the beginning of the phrase, as in, for instance, *Jean c'est le mari à Rose* (basically 'Jean, he is Rose's husband'), with the alternative being to omit the *c'*. When this sort of dislocation occurs in SF, it's usually to put emphasis on a particular constituent of the sentence, but Hyde employs it whenever it can possibly be inserted, effectively exclusively highlighting the subject.

Is this actually a compulsory rule of MOF? Or could it be in some way an artifact of how Hyde's data was collected? More likely, it's the latter. Löfstedt (1985:287), referring to the Carrière folktales, speculated that "c'est la tradition orale de ces contes qui explique probablement la fréquence de la ségmentation [sic] syntaxique"; 'the oral tradition of these tales probably explains the frequency of "syntactic segmentation."' Hyde herself admits that both the topicalized and non-topicalized forms are equally

grammatically valid for native speakers (Thomas 1979). It makes sense that given the historical spoken tradition of the Missouri dialect, she would choose to canonize the variant more closely associated with conversational French.

2.1.8 À as the preposition of ownership (le mari à Rose) (3)

In SF, *de* is the traditional preposition that indicates possession, although *à* appears commonly in actual spoken language. In MOF *à* has predictably usurped the role entirely, so that SF *le mari de/à Rose* ('Rose's husband') is always MOF *le mari à Rose* (Dorrance 1935). This is equally the case in Canadian and Louisiana French (McDermott 1941).

2.1.9 Some inflected wordforms of êt' (J'cheus) (3)

Fittingly, MOF is irregular in its treatment of irregular verbs. On page 3, we encounter the first indication that the traditional forms of SF *être* ('to be') are not fully replicated. Besides dropping its second syllable in the infinitive (as in *n'onc'* below in 2.1.11), it has a different first-person singular form, *cheus* (SF *suis*; see my *pis* entry, also in 2.1.11, for a hypothesis about this form) (7). Also, in the third-person plural imperfect, MOF has *sontaient*, a fusion of its present-tense form *sont* and the SF imperfect *étaient* (79). This distinction serves to differentiate the third-person plural from the other five variants, which are all pronounced roughly identically in MOF as [etɛ].

In fact, the same amalgamation takes place in this form for other irregular verbs: *faire* ('to do') has *fonzaient* (*font* + SF *faisaient*), *aller* ('to go') has *vonaient* (*vont* + SF *allaient*), and *aouère* ('to have') has *ontvaient* (*ont* + SF *avaient*) (Thomas 1979).

Compare this array to Canadian French, which has *sontaient*, *fontaient*, and *vontaient* but maintains *avaient*, a different approach to the same process (Walker 1984).¹⁴

2.1.10 Pour proliferation (J'veux pour vous rencontrer ma femme) (6)

English *for* generally has broader applicability than its SF counterpart *pour*, and MOF attempts to remedy this discrepancy by inserting *pour* into all sorts of anglicized expressions. Here Hyde uses *J'veux pour vous rencontrer ma femme* (lit. 'I want for you to meet my wife'), which substitutes for the more complex subjunctive SF expression *Je veux que vous rencontriez ma femme*. Carrière (1939) noted a variety of ways in which *pour* is combined with various verbs where SF would use a different preposition or none at all, such as *demander pour* (SF *demander/demander de*, 'to ask for') or *chercher pour* (SF *chercher*, 'to look for'). Sometimes the English translation necessitates an additional degree of extrapolation, like when *vouèrè* ('to see') is overly literally combined with *pour* to form another 'to look for' phrase (Thogmartin 1970).

2.1.11 Miscellaneous vocabulary explanations (Lesson 1)

Eunne (1). Hyde changes the spelling of the indefinite feminine article in phrases like *eunne jolie journée* ('a beautiful day'). This indicates the initial vowel lowering from [y]. Whether it lowers to [ø] (as Thogmartin transcribed it) or [œ] (as Carrière, Dorrance, and to some extent Hyde herself claimed) is up for debate. Regardless, this transformation occurs in a variety of pre-nasal contexts, as in *breunne* (SF *brune*, 'brown.F'), *pleume* (SF *plume*, 'feather'), and *preune* (SF *prune*, 'plum') (Dorrance 1935; Thogmartin 1970). But this trend is ultimately inconsistent; MOF still has [y] in words

¹⁴ The differences I discuss in this section are confined to the present and imperfect tenses, but *êt'* also undergoes modifications to its future forms in MOF; see my later discussion of its future tense (2.6.1).

like *lune* ('moon') and *brume* ('mist') (Thogmartin 1970). So unfortunately, as Hyde puts it, the best we can do is guess at which [y] words will undergo this transition: "There do not appear to be any ways to predict which words will be said with which midvowel" (Thomas 1979:101).

Neuf (1). Most salient in Hyde's textbook is the pronunciation difference between the SF and MOF realizations of *neuf* ('nine' or 'new'): [nœf] and [nø] (which Hyde transcribes as "ner" on page 1), respectively. Carrière signified the lost final consonant by sometimes writing the word as *neu[ff]* in his folktales (Thomas 1981:142). He also applies this treatment to *bœu[ff]*, which by dropping its [f] actually creates consistency with the silent ending of its plural form *bœufs* ([bø]) (Thomas 1981:5).

Neuf experiences a nuanced semantic shift in MOF, too. It experiences semantic broadening, encompassing SF *nouveau* (also 'new') as well. The lost SF contrast between the two is that *neuf* means specifically something which has recently been created, whereas *nouveau* is just new to its owner. However, in MOF, *neuf* (or its feminine counterpart *neuve*) appears in all adjectival contexts.

Notably, though, MOF *neuf* does not inherit two key roles of SF *nouveau*. In Carrière's folktales, *nouveau*'s feminine form *nouvelle* continues to appear in MOF in various retained compounds, such as exclusively plural noun *les nouvelles* ('the news') or verb *earnouvellera* (SF *renouvellera*, 'renew.3SG.FUT') (Thomas 1981:140, 55). We don't encounter an analogous noun **les neuves* or verb **reneuverer*. In addition, while SF *nouveau* is one of the so-called BAGS (beauty, age, goodness, and size) adjectives

that precedes its noun, MOF *neuf* retains its postnominal position, creating an odd asymmetry with its antonym, *vieux* ('old').

Finally, with regard to morphology, MOF also overcompensates for the loss of [f] in *neuf* by enacting what Dorrance (1935) called a "false liaison" and manifesting 'ninth' as *neuzième* instead of SF *neuvième* (which merely voices the [f]). This is especially surprising given that we see the "correct" liaison in *Basic French Conversations*, where the pronunciation guide for *il a neuf ans* ('he is 9') on page 8 is "eel ah nerv ah(n)." Instead, we get an unexpected epenthesis of [z] to liaise between vowels, which is actually incredibly widespread in MOF, widely reported by past researchers in phrases like *quatre-z-enfants* (SF *quatre enfants*, 'four children') and *queueque-z-ane* (SF *quelqu'un*, 'someone') (Dorrance 1935; Carrière 1939; Thomas 1979).

Réste (3). Besides the aforementioned [ɛ] tensing, MOF *réster* differs semantically from SF *rester* ('to stay') in that it encompasses the meaning of SF *vivre* ('to live'), as in *Vous réste icitte à la Vieille Mine?* ('Do you live here in Old Mines?'). While *rester* can take on this meaning in SF, in this dialect it overshadows all potential synonyms. It's also worth noting that the preposition following *restér* appears flexible, since we encounter both *Vous réste... à...* and *Non, j'reste dans...* (3).

Méquier (3). This word meaning 'occupation' is a variation of SF *métier* and is interesting for a couple reasons. For one, it exemplifies an excessive assimilation in which dental stops before the palatal glide [j] overshoot the approximant's palatal place of articulation to become velar, as in MOF *moquié* (SF *moitié*, 'half'), *aghieu* (SF *adieu*, 'goodbye'), etc. (105, 43). Carrière (1941b:512) considered it "even farther" for other

North American French dialects to produce forms like *metchié* and *motchié*, even though the palato-alveolar affricates would seem a more precise assimilation. These dialects only travel “even farther” in the sense that they have to make the leap to non-endemic sounds, as the affricates don’t occur in SF phonology.

It’s also interesting to see Hyde deploy French-origin words like *méquier* and *ouvrage* (‘work’ on page 9) despite the fact that, as early as 1939, Carrière reported that the English loanwords *job* and *tréde* were already in wide usage among MOF speakers. Quite possibly, she failed to drum up support among her informants — who, she recalls, had a deeply negative opinion of their own variant of French, even if they didn’t categorically stigmatize all English words — for these transparently obvious cross-linguistic transfers (Carrière 1939; Rosemary Hyde, pers. comm.).

Pis (4). This MOF (and more broadly North American) word for ‘and,’ which derives from SF *puis* (‘then’), is emblematic of the dialect’s desire to eradicate all instances of [tʃi] by reducing it to either [y] or [i] (Carrière 1941b). This reduction isn’t a particularly prominent process within the limits of *Basic French Conversations*, but Dorrance (1935) managed to collect plenty of examples in his glossary, among them *depus* (SF *depuis*, ‘since’) and *quisine* (SF *cuisine*, ‘cooking’). The first-person singular form of *êt*’ mentioned above, *cheus*, has also clearly undergone some form of this process, perhaps combined over time with the aforementioned [y] lowering as in *eunne*, since it appears as *sus* and *chus* in the folktales.

One of the more contentious issues resulting from this shift is the fate of SF third-person indirect object pronoun *lui*, which is realized varyingly as MOF *lui* (which Hyde

notes occurs more often in stressed position), *li* (the pronunciation consistent with the phonological process), or just *y*. This last simplification led several researchers astray. Ignoring the process at play, Thogmartin (1970) supposed that MOF made “no distinction between personal and non-personal indirect objects,” due to the coincidental existence of the homophonous, similarly defined pronoun *y*. Löfstedt (1985) also ignored the tripartite variation in favor of concluding that *lui* turns to *y*. With this in mind, it’s easy to infer why Hyde avoids *y*, choosing *lui* (9) or better yet *li* (95), which demonstrates the phonological difference while also averting ambiguity, as the textbook form.

N’onc’ (4). From SF *oncle* (‘uncle’), this lexical item is a product of two characteristics of Missouri French. One is an overextension of French liaison that often transplants the /n/ of the article *un* onto a following vowel-initial noun (Thomas 1979). This also occurs with *n’homme* (62). Another is the omission of unstressed, mostly word-final [lə] and [rə] syllables from SF words (which has already appeared once with *êt*), although this is common to all colloquial French and thus easily attributable to the spoken modality of the dialect. Note that this happens more rarely, and less visibly in the textbook, with other unstressed syllables, like the first in SF *demander* (‘to ask’; MOF ‘*mander*) and *commencer* (‘to begin’; MOF ‘*mencher*) (Dorrance 1935; Carrière 1937).¹⁵

Garçon (4). The SF word for ‘boy’ is broadened to include SF *fil*s (‘son’), as is the case in Louisiana French (LaFleur & Forkner 2005).

Grands-enfants (5). This would seem a straightforward back-formation from *grands-parents* and/or calque of English *grandchildren*. However, it differs from

¹⁵ *Mencher* is somewhat exceptional because its dropped syllable contains [ɔ] rather than [ə].

Louisiana French, which retains SF *petits-enfants* instead (“Themes,” n.d.). As for the fate of this latter compound (lit. ‘little children’) in MOF, we can find some clues in Hyde’s translation of the “John the Bear” folktale, in which *p’tsits frères* and *p’tsites soeurs* were translated as ‘stepbrothers’ and ‘stepsisters,’ respectively, sliding over to take the place of SF *beaux-frères* and *belles-sœurs* (Thomas 1981:21).

Maisonne (6). This spelling represents both one of Carrière’s (1941a) partial denasalizations and an attempt to make *maison* (‘house’) more clearly a feminine noun, since it’s a little bit of an orthographic anomaly in SF. Thogmartin (1970) did note that he also heard *le maison*, which takes the opposite tack, reassigning the SF word to the gender more consistent with its spelling. On the other hand, this apparent pattern is completely thrown out when a word like *famille* inexplicably appears as masculine once later in the text: *Il faut joliment de l’argent pour le faire vivre, le famille* (roughly, ‘You need a lot of money to support a family’) (35).

Beçons (8). Although typically spelled *bessons*, this dialectal variant meaning ‘twins’ is widely known even among SF speakers, even as *jumeaux* is in much wider usage; *bessons* has connections to central French regions like Berry and Bourbonnais and corresponds to analogous words in Catalan and Occitan (Thogmartin 1970).

Quias (12). *Quia* (SF *voiture*, ‘car’) is one of the more etymologically puzzling words in MOF. Because Hyde’s spelling is so visibly different, the connection to ‘car’ is not immediately apparent, but she claims it’s just a palatalization of the first consonant. The final /r/ is also deleted, though, which forms a contrast with the other North American French form *char* (LaFleur & Forkner 2005).

2.1.12 Miscellaneous vocabulary without explanations

ben / bain, (SF *bien*, ‘well’) (1), *pa* (SF *papa*, ‘dad’) (3), *man* (SF *maman*, ‘mom’) (3), *niveu* (SF *neveu*, ‘nephew’) (4), *mieur(e)* (SF *meilleur(e)*, ‘better’ or ‘best’) (7).

2.2 Lesson 2: Quoi j’aime et pis comme j’semb’ (17)

2.2.1 Newly versatile beaucoup (J’cheus pas beaucoup vieux) (19)

The SF adverb *très* (‘very’) is lost in MOF in favor of a combination of *joliment* (lit. ‘prettily’) and, here, *beaucoup*. In SF, *beaucoup* is also sometimes an adverb (e.g. *merci beaucoup*), but it usually means ‘a lot’ in the nominal usage — as seen in this lesson’s *beaucoup des amis* (‘a lot of friends’) (21). Modifying adjectives like *vieux* with *beaucoup* is actually a distinctive feature of MOF.

The *beaucoup des amis* expression is also revelatory for another reason: it demonstrates the Missouri dialect’s lack of partitive *de*, which appears in standard French after expressions of indeterminate quantity, even before plural nouns like *amis*. Not so here. Indeed, MOF eliminates other miscellaneous, potentially confusing uses of *de* with plurals too, such as before a BAGS adjective — this lesson has *des bons amis*, not the expected *de bons amis* (21).

2.2.2 Feminine adjective differentiation (J’ai la tête nouèrte) (19)

In a rather robust process, adjectives that have homophonous SF masculine and feminine forms often insert an extra [t] in their Missouri French feminine form, so here we encounter the example of *nouèrte* (SF *noire*, ‘black.F’) (Carrière 1937). Other examples include the surprisingly common *fièrte* (SF *fière*, ‘proud.F’), which expands to mean ‘happy’ in MOF and is littered throughout the culture’s folktales (e.g. Thomas 1981:30).

Elsewhere, Thogmartin (1970) encountered the rarer *mûrte* (SF *mûre*, ‘mature.F’) and *pourrite* (SF *pourrie*, ‘rotten.F’), the latter a particularly interesting case because it must have back-formed from the past-participle of the verb *pourrir*.¹⁶

2.2.3 Miscellaneous vocabulary explanations (Lesson 2)

Avé (17). This is an alternate spelling of SF *avec* (‘with’) that only appears rarely in both the textbook and the Carrière folktales, although it seems overrepresented in the lyrics of songs like “La Belle Blondine” and “Marie Madeleine” that Hyde inserts later in the book following Lesson 4 (e.g. 61). By the turn of the 19th century, one account claimed that *avé* was almost universally replacing *avec* prior to consonant-initial words (Porny 1812). While Dorrance (1935) implied it was also the dominant variant in MOF, it appears to actually be in free variation with *avec* before consonants (with *avec*, as expected, favored before vowels), and for whatever reason, unlike for most other words, Hyde did not choose a single pronunciation to use throughout.

À c’t heure (17). This expression (lit. ‘at this hour’), meaning ‘now,’ replaces SF *maintenant*. Löfstedt (1985) noted its similarity to the archaic and dialectal variant *astheure* (or *asteur*), which is an extant expression in Louisiana and elsewhere (LaFleur & Forkner 2005). Neither Hyde nor Carrière chose to condense it into one word orthographically, although the analogous *taleure*, from SF *tout à l’heure* (‘in a moment’), crops up every now and again (e.g. Thomas 1981:41).

¹⁶ It’s unclear whether *jolitte* is a true case of this phenomenon because while it does fit this feminine-differentiation tendency, it also could be an example of word-final [t]-epenthesis in stressed position (see my section on [t] suffixation, 2.1.6).

Dans le mois de septemb' (17). Another example of MOF more literally translating an English expression, while also streamlining its arsenal of prepositions. SF has *au mois de septembre* ('in the month of September,' although *au* is really more like 'at the'). However, the language already includes expressions like *dans un mois* ('in a month'; *dans* is a more direct analogue for English *in* that is also used spatially). Combining these expressions simplifies Missouri French's grammar and draws it closer to English.

N'a (17). This expression is the dialect's variant of SF *il y a* ('there is'). Given that MOF already typically drops the [l] in *il*, it's quite reasonable that this could have formed as a contraction of the common *il y en a* (basically 'there is some amount of').¹⁷ It's frequently attested in Carrière's folktales (as *nn'a* e.g. Thomas 1981:7). MOF's use of this expression distinguishes it from other North American French dialects, and for his part, Thogmartin (1970) traced it back to a Norman form, *i'n n'a*.

J'ai la tête [couleur] (19). Against the trend of its dialectal adaptations, MOF actually complicates hair description. Speakers still describe hair length with *J'ai les ch'veux [longs ou courts]* ('I have [long or short] hair') (19). However, hair color is, for whatever reason, head (*tête*) color instead. Perhaps this is an imitation of the English expression *redhead*, which can now be faithfully expressed as *la tête rouge*.¹⁸

Jouer (20). While one of Carrière's folktales concentrated on a character who *joue dzu violon* ('plays the violin'), and indeed Standard French typically employs *jouer*

¹⁷ Thanks to Brett Kessler (pers. comm.) for this suggestion, which fits the overall pattern of other MOF expressions like *ma* and *squé* quite well.

¹⁸ *La tête orange* would be a more accurate depiction of reality, but that would have required English to actually start describing things as "orange" earlier in its linguistic history.

de (lit. ‘play of’) for playing instruments, Hyde omits the *de* of *dzu* to yield the more English-friendly expression *jouer le guitare* (Thomas 1981; 62). Note that in the preceding line, *jouer à la boule* remains intact.¹⁹ The simplification of *jouer* expressions is therefore not comprehensive.

Jouer is also conjugated slightly differently in the Missouri dialect, where it is realized as *jouzent* in the third-person present indicative plural (77). The same insertion takes place in Canada, where “verb stems ending in vowels manifest a general tendency to insert a final consonant (at least in the present indicative and subjunctive)” per Walker 1984:128. However, with the exception of *marissent*, which appears just once in Hyde’s text (77) and once in the Carrière folktales (Thomas 1981:19), Walker’s verb forms are unattested in MOF literature.²⁰

Charrer (20). This is a distinctly North American verb for ‘to speak’ that replaces SF *parler* in both Missouri and Louisiana (LaFleur & Forkner 2005). However, its noun form, *charrement* (‘gossip’), is more uniquely Missourian, to the point that Vézina (2005:553) lauded it as a “missourisme” attributed to “la créativité des locuteurs du FM... et la dynamique interne de la langue” (‘the creativity of MOF speakers and the internal dynamics of the language’).

Hyde varyingly employs *charrer à français* and *charrer en français* (79), which, given that all of her dialogues are based on actual exchanges between speakers, might

¹⁹ An extra *à* does get attached to *aimer* in that sentence, making for a more literal translation of ‘loves to.’ This same preposition is about to be attached to *connait* in Lesson 3.

²⁰ We do encounter a single example of *fonzent* in Lesson 6 (77), which would suggest that this process could potentially take place even with nasalized vowels, but there’s too little data to generalize on this front.

well be two speakers using different levels of nasalization for the same preposition (see my discussion of *attendre* in 2.3.2).

Frutage (21). *Frutage* is a general MOF term for fruit that Dorrance (1935) attributed to the collision of Old French *fruitage* — which also found its way into archaic English — and the dialectal French adjective *affrutagé*. Personally, I would be inclined to dismiss the second half of Dorrance’s etymology and suggest that *frutage* is just a direct evolution of *fruitage*, in line with MOF’s crusade against SF [qi] (recall *pis* and such in 2.1.11).

Zoseaux (21). Hyde had several possible spellings to choose from for this vaguely reduplicative variant of SF *oiseau* (‘bird’). The folktales contain what could logically be considered an earlier variant *zouèseaux*, which more clearly shows the effects of the MOF [wɛ]-over-[wa] trend. Carrière (1937) and Dorrance (1935) both ascribed this variant to the influence of black slaves coming up from the south, and in fact, Louisiana manifests the most extreme transformation, *zeauzeau*.

Ghèmes (21). This means ‘games’ and is used in place of SF *jeux*. It is a rather transparent anglicism to be sure, but one that Louisiana French took in an entirely different direction; to the south, Carrière (1939) noted, *guème* means ‘rooster,’ as in ‘gamecock,’ a usage that is still common in Louisiana. It’s unclear why Hyde used the *gh* spelling here, which doesn’t really fit native French orthography. Carrière, for his part, opted for *guime* in the folktales when discussing card games (Thomas 1981:114).

Quoi c’est vous l’a besoin (21). No *de* appears here, unlike in SF *avoir besoin de* (‘to need [of]’). However, Hyde assures readers that either usage is still valid,

unsurprising given that *de* still seems mandatory in the folktales (Thomas 1979). The “humbler rural Canadians” to whom Dorrance (1935:60) attributed the omission of *de* do not entirely have their way.

Traveler. This verb is another straightforward English derivative for ‘to travel’ that replaces SF *voyager*.

2.2.4 Miscellaneous vocabulary without explanations

vialon (SF *violon*, ‘violin’) (21), *chasons*, (SF *chansons*, ‘songs’) (21)

2.3 Lesson 3: Toutes sortes de choses qui coûte cher (31)

2.3.1 Vaille and [j] subjunctives (Pis faut que j’vaille au magasin demain) (31)

Compared to SF *aille* (‘go.3SG.SBJV’), the addition of a [v] to the beginning of the corresponding MOF form brings it more in line with its indicative variant *va* and distances it from its irregular infinitive *aller*. The folktales reveal that a similar change occurs in the first- and second-person subjunctive forms — but only sometimes. In fact, all these forms appear in free variation with *aille* and *ailles* in the folktales, indicating that the alteration is not comprehensive among MOF speakers.

The more salient characteristic of *vaille* is its [j]. This glide is of course present in SF *aille*, and the subjunctives of several other SF verbs with [I] in their infinitives, such as *veuille* (‘want.3SG.SBJV’). However, in MOF, it is also extrapolated to the subjunctives of several verbs that do not have an [I] in their infinitives, and therefore no glide in their SF subjunctives. One excellent example is the aforementioned *seye* (SF *soit*, ‘be.3SG.SBJV’) (42), which might otherwise manifest as *[swe] or *[se] due to the [wa]-[wɛ] dialectal difference, if not for its subjunctive mood. Thogmartin (1970) noted that in

some regular verbs such as *crier* ('to cry'), which has *criye* rather than SF *crie* in the subjunctive, the [j] marker helps provide a valuable phonetic distinction between indicative and subjunctive forms — one that does not exist in SF.

2.3.2 Miscellaneous vocabulary explanations (Lesson 3)

Ma (31). Missouri French substitutes *ma*, likely a shortening of *je m'en vas* ('I am leaving'), which appears quite frequently in the folktales, for SF *je vais* ('I am going'). *Ta* analogously replaces *tu vas* ('you are going') (79). Note that this only occurs in 'I am going to [verb]' constructions where the form of *aller* is followed by another verb in the infinitive: *Ma acheter des souliers pour Lucien* ('I am going to buy shoes for Lucien') (31). The implementation of these contractions simplifies the *futur proche* considerably.

Connait (32). SF *connaître* is restricted primarily to knowledge or awareness of a person or thing. In Missouri French, as Hyde notes, the verb *connaître* also encompasses the functionality of SF *savoir* — most notably verb + infinitive 'know how to' constructions like *Qui c'est qui connaît arranger vot' quia?* ('Who knows how to fix your car?') (Thomas 1979) (33). Sometimes, Hyde will insert an *à* between *connaître* and the following verb, more literally enacting the 'to' of the infinitive construction, as she does with *aimer* (see note 18 in 2.2.3).

Attendre (33). There are two ways of interpreting the novel observation that *attendre* can mean 'to hear' in Missouri French. One could position it as a semantic broadening, that is as SF *attendre* ('to wait') encompassing SF *entendre* ('to hear'). Alternatively, the spelling *attendre* could just be Hyde using a familiar French

orthography to transcribe *entendre* with a denasalized initial vowel, rather than opting for a confusing **atendre* or some equivalent.

This is another one of the frequent obstacles of constructing a textbook for a purely spoken dialect, and it comes into play on other occasions, too. Consider the case of *venir*, typically ‘to come’ in both MOF and SF, which appears as ‘to become’ in Lesson 5: *Les feuilles alle commence a venir vertes* (‘The leaves are beginning to become green’) (63). Is this really a semantic broadening to overtake SF *devenir*, or has the unstressed first syllable of *devenir* just faded with time? More importantly, is it even meaningful to try to distinguish the two processes? (I contend that it is not.)

Ervenir (34). Though it dominated in Carrière’s folktales, in Hyde’s textbook this metathesized form is in free variation with *revenir* (‘to return’), which is identical to the SF form (Löfstedt 1985). A third option for Hyde’s informants was to use *venir* plus the English adverb *back*, which they frequently inserted into their spoken speech but deemed too improper to include in an educational work (Thomas 1979).²¹ Unlike English insertions, the [rə] → [ər] tendency is deemed widely acceptable, not only showing up as a prefix in *ervenir* and *eurcommencé* (SF *recommencé*, ‘restarted’) but even taking effect word-medially in *peurnait* (SF *prenait*, ‘take.3SG.IMPERF’).

Queud’chose (34). In this variant of SF *quelque chose* (‘something’), we see [ɛ] rounding, [l] getting deleted, and [k] and [ʃ] dissimilating. An analogous form, spelled *quet’chose*, appears in Canadian French. Consider also MOF *queud’fouès* (SF *quelquefois*, ‘sometime’), *queuds’un* (SF *quelqu’un*, ‘someone’), and the like (76, 80).

²¹ One of the only English forms allowed into *Basic French Conversations I & II* is *show*, in Lesson 4, which Hyde leaves in English quotation marks.

Piasse, sescalins (36). The MOF words for currency are perhaps the greatest evidence that Missouri was once under Spanish rule — along with the perfunctory performance of “La Marcha Real” at Old Mines’ annual *fête*, that is. *Piasse*, which means ‘dollar’ in MOF, is a cluster-reduced version of SF *piastre*, which refers back to the Spanish *peso*. Each *piasse* consisted of eight of the Spanish *real*, or MOF *escalin*, a word that evolved from the Dutch *schelling*, presumably while the Netherlands were themselves under Spanish control. Carrière (1939) observed *deux escalins* (for 25 cents) and *six escalins* (for 75) in wide use in Missouri even with Spanish currency long gone. But by the time of Hyde’s research, although *deux escalins* had died off in favor of *quart* — more consistent, no doubt, with English *quarter* — *six escalins* had survived as the abbreviated *sescalins*.²²

2.3.3 Miscellaneous vocabulary without explanations

laitte (SF *lait*, ‘milk’) (32), *chouage* (SF *sauvage*, ‘wild’) (33), *faisent* (SF *font*, ‘make’ 3P. PRES.) (35), *Christmisse* (SF *Noël*, ‘Christmas’) (35)

2.4 Lesson 4: L’ouvrage (+ song lyrics) (40)

2.4.1 Telling time in Missouri French (Il est cinq minutes après trois) (41)

The system of time-telling that Hyde lays out here is closer to English than Standard French, but it does not completely copy English phrasings. Where SF would have *Il est trois heures cinq* for ‘it’s 3:05,’ MOF has *Il est cinq minutes après trois*, a literal translation of ‘it’s five minutes after 3:00,’ which would seem to correspond more directly to English. (Note also the omission of *heures* for simplification.) On the other

²² And it now survives even longer as the name of a Franco-American literary magazine.

hand, something like *Il est cinq minutes pour trois* (SF *il est trois heures moins cinq*, ‘it’s 2:55’) literally translates as ‘it’s five minutes for 3:00’ and is therefore harder to place. In fact, Thogmartin (1970) reported that, incredibly, this represents the abbreviated *fore* for *before* making its way into French, as does Hyde (Thomas 1979). Elsewhere, the use of *quinze minutes* in Hyde’s examples implies that *quart*, used in SF to measure 15-minute intervals (i.e. quarters of an hour), is less common.

2.4.2 Miscellaneous vocabulary explanations (Lesson 4 + song lyrics)

(Comme un vieux), poc’ à poc’ (42). Like *sescalins* (2.3.2), *poc’ à poc’* is a rare remnant of long-forgotten Spanish influence on Missouri. Spanish *poco a poco* means ‘little by little,’ but *poc’ à poc’* is used as a response to *Ça va ben?* and means ‘so-so,’ kind of like SF *comme ci, comme ça* (Carrière 1939). And while I won’t claim this to be the actual etymology of the *comme un vieux* (‘like an old person’) portion of the phrase, it seems appropriate that a phrase inherited from a language long absent from Missouri essentially refers to itself as old-fashioned.

Qu’ri (43). Past researchers’ treatment of this word, derived from SF *quérir*, has been rather peculiar. Carrière (1937) included it in his glossary and Löfstedt (1985:287) described its use as a synonym of *chercher* (‘to look for’) as an “archaïsme” characteristic of the Missouri dialect. However, since it lacks any other meaning in either SF or MOF, and *chercher* continues to exist anyway alongside it (e.g. Thomas 1981:117), it’s hard to understand how its presence could really be construed as a dialectal irregularity, besides sounding mildly out-of-date to the modern French ear. In fact, in my

opinion, the most distinctive feature of *qu'ri* is its dropped final consonant, consistent even in the folktales, which makes it the rare infinitive to end in something other than *r*.

Rentourner (43). This verb meaning ‘to return’ resists the tendency of Missouri French to flip /re/ to /er/ (see the *ervenir* entry in 2.3.2). Instead, its vowel gets nasalized, which Dorrance (1935) characterized as a different metathesis, one acting on the synonymous reflexive phrase *s'en retourner*. But it only appears this way some of the time; in fact, the expected *eurtourner* appeared just as often in Carrière’s folktales.

L'aut' avant-hier, l'aut' après-demain (46). Missouri French deploys this pair of expressions for ‘three days ago’ and ‘three days from now,’ respectively, instead of opting for the numerical SF route of *trois jours avant* and *trois jours après*. The MOF dialect fuses SF *l'autre jour* with *avant-hier* and *après-demain* to yield the original ‘the other day before yesterday’ and ‘the other day after tomorrow.’

Assimine (61). The *assimine* is the fruit of the paw-paw tree that gives Missouri French its nickname; the tree itself is called an *assiminier*.²³ Likewise, MOF has *plaquemine* for ‘persimmon’ and *plaqueminier* for its tree. These words have a distinctive etymology; their *-mine* ending comes from a *-min-* morpheme meaning fruit in Algonquian languages such as Myaamia, which has *ahsiimini* and *pyaakimini*. The Virginia Algonquian variant of this morpheme actually gives English the word *persimmon*, too (Carrière 1939; Souag 2017).

2.4.3 Miscellaneous vocabulary without explanations

²³ Bone and Villmer, community authorities on Old Mines French culture, edited a booklet documenting the history of the *Guillonnée* New Year’s Eve tradition (Beaulne dit Bone & Villmer 2004). Per a suggestion from Ray Brassieur, they labeled it a volume of *les éditions assimineur*, with *assimineur* a portmanteau of *assimine* and *mineur* (‘miner’).

boss (SF *patron*, ‘boss’) (42), *jusse* (SF *juste*, ‘just’) (43), *sélement* (SF *seulement*, ‘only’) (54), *enouie* (SF *envoie*, ‘send.3SG.PRES’) (55), *mourer* (SF *mourir*, ‘to die’) (59), *dessur* (SF *dessus*, ‘on’) (59)

2.5 Lesson 5: Les jardins pis les bouquières (62)

2.5.1 -là as demonstrative (N’homme-là) (62)

N’homme-là (‘That man’), the subject of sentence B of Dialogue A, displays not only a false liaison from the article *un* (see my section on *n’onc*’ in **2.1.11**) but also the demonstrative capabilities of the *-là* suffix in MOF. In SF, *-là* combines with the demonstrative articles *ce*, *cette*, and the like to form phrases like *cette maisonne-là* (‘that house’), but the demonstratives drop in MOF (Thogmartin 1979). This is a widely attested feature of French dialects; Valdman (2005:220) called it “un trait de la variété de français en usage dans les colonies plantocratiques” (‘a trait of the French in use in planter-ruled colonies’) like Haiti.

2.5.2 Miscellaneous vocabulary explanations (Lesson 5)

Bouquière (62). The meaning of *bouquière* is a bit challenging to determine from context, but it appears to refer to an area where flowers are planted. The SF phrase for ‘flower bed’ is *parterre de fleurs*, but the word *fleur* is entirely absent from MOF, even in the folktales, outside of a single expression in Lesson 6, *pêches à fleurs*, in which it seems to fulfill an adjectival role (76). Instead, MOF *bouquet* is used to refer to flowers more generally, as in *T’as pas sumé des bouquets?* (‘You didn’t plant flowers?’), so it makes sense that *bouquière* emerged as a back-formation.

Mouiller (62). In SF it means ‘to get wet,’ but in MOF, *mouiller* usurps SF *pleuvoir*, ‘to rain.’ It appears in the third-person dummy subject construction *Il mouille* (‘It is raining’). A related verb *mouillasser* (roughly ‘to mist’) is also common. These variants are not unique to Missouri, as they can be found in the dialects of “Canada, Louisiana, Saintonge, Aunis, [and] Poitou,” as Dorrance (1935:87) noted; his glossary also contained the adjective *mouilleux* (‘rainy’), derived from the verb in the same manner as SF *pluvieux*.

Sumé (63). Another product of MOF’s irregular vowel shifts, this is quite simply (the past participle of) an alteration of SF *semer* (‘to sow’). Dorrance (1935) also heard MOF *sumelle* for SF *semelle* (‘sole’) and *fumelle* for SF *femelle* (‘female’), but neither of these [ə]-[y] differences comes up in the folktales or Hyde’s text.

En devant de (63). This expression is somewhat recursive, as it calques English ‘in front of’ even though *devant* already possesses that entire meaning on its own.

Chanze (64). The SF verb *changer* (‘to change’) experiences place dissimilation between its two fricatives in MOF. In the folktales, *décharzer* (SF *decharger*, ‘to unload’) demonstrates the effects of this same phonological process, which Carrière (1937) characteristically ascribed to the dialect of Louisiana slaves (Thomas 1981:54).

Chanzer appears to also take on a broader, albeit uncertain, meaning besides ‘to change.’ In sentences like Hyde’s *Quelle sorte de souliers vous chanzait quand vous l’était tout petit?* (‘What kind of shoes did you wear when you were really little?’ on page 80) and, in the reflexive form, the folktales’ *P’tsit Jean i’ s’a chanzé tou[t] en rouge* (‘Little John dressed in all red’), the verb bears a resemblance to SF *porter* (‘to wear’)

and *s'habiller* ('to get dressed') (Thomas 1981:17). But here in Lesson 5, where Hyde writes *la lune pis les étouéles alles chanze les personnes* ('the moon and the stars change people'), its meaning isn't as clear. It's difficult to connect this axiom to the surrounding sentences about different vegetables growing under different moons. Based on the successive lines that claim that *Dans le clair de la lune, on est à son plus faible* ('in the moonlight, one is at one's weakest') and make reference to zodiac signs, it seems Hyde is discussing the ways in which changes in celestial bodies can supposedly affect people.²⁴

Rabiole, spiniche, maï (64). *Rabiole* is the MOF name for a white turnip, the same as in Canada, and also Saintonge or Limousin as Thogmartin (1970) added. *Spiniche* refers to and resembles English *spinach* (*épinard* in SF). *Maï* is just SF and Louisiana French *maïs* ('corn') with the final consonant dropped, hence why it appears as *maï[s]* in the folktales (Thomas 1981:39). The Spanish-derived word is confined to formerly Spain-owned French-speaking regions; it did not reach Canada, which takes a distinctly Old World perspective to naming corn, calling it *blé d'Inde*, literally 'wheat of India' (Carrière 1939).²⁵

Mûre haute, mûre courante, cathérinette, milon français (65). The distinctions between the various fruits in Hyde's list of *choses pour manger* are very fine-grained. We have *mûres hautes*, which are probably 'blackberries,' a dialectal coinage also used in the French of Saint-Pierre et Miquelon (Brasseur and Chauveau 1990). In *mûres courantes*, the word *courantes* looks like an attempt to imitate English *currants*,

²⁴ Brett Kessler (pers. comm.) also called attention to this astrologically inclined suggestion, which was understated in earlier versions of this thesis.

²⁵ French also applied this *d'Inde* tactic to label 'turkey' as *coq d'Inde*, lit. 'chicken of India,' which yielded the modern word *dinde*.

but *groseilles* already refers to red currants, so perhaps these are black currants. *Fraises* are strawberries, as in SF. *Cathérinettes* are varyingly defined as ‘dwarf raspberries’ and ‘wild blackberries’ (Dorrance 1935; McDermott 1941); given that we already assigned ‘blackberries,’ let’s lean toward the former.

Finally, we come to *milons français, pis les aut’ milons*. Given the context, it’s fair to assume *milon* corresponds to SF *melon*. For some reason, McDermott (1941:103) defined *melon français* as ‘watermelon’ before immediately citing a passage that puts *melon français* in direct contrast with ‘watermelon’: “Les habitants sèment encore des melons d’eau, et d’autres espèces qu’ils nomment vulgairement *melon français*” (“The inhabitants still plant watermelons, and other species that they commonly name “French melon.””) McDermott then added that “Read (50) has ‘cantaloupe or rockmelon,’” and Thogmartin (1970) later echoed this definition, so it’s safe to assume cantaloupe is the real French melon, and everything else falls under the umbrella of *les aut’ milons*.

Amrassé (65). *Amrassé* appears to be the past participle of a metathesized version of SF *ramasser* (‘to collect’). Löfstedt (1985:287) noted a similar treatment of SF *parcourir* (‘to travel’), which appears as MOF *couparir* and *courparir* in folktales, although her claim that this switch is intended purely “pour plaisanter” (‘as a joke’) is unsubstantiated, especially given that while only one appears in Hyde’s text, a diverse array of words undergo this process (Thomas 1981:5). Even ignoring the widespread [rə] -> [ər] correspondence discussed earlier (2.3.2), Dorrance (1935) remarked upon *escouer* (SF *secouer*, ‘to shake’) and *méquerdi* (SF *mercredi*, ‘Wednesday’); see also my previous section on *rentourner* (2.4.2)

Marie-l'or (65). This is one of MOF's most contrived calques, for 'marigold' (SF *souci*).

2.5.3 Miscellaneous vocabulary without explanations

muléttes (SF *mulets*, 'mules'; see also 2.8.1) (65)

2.6 Lesson 6: La jeunesse pis la vieillesse (76)

2.6.1 The future of êt' (Ma t'êt' content) (79)

The traditional French simple future tense does still exist in MOF, but it doesn't appear much in Hyde's text and is therefore clearly not a significant part of actual dialectal speech. Instead, we see frequent use of the *futur proche*, which uses a form of *aller* followed by an infinitive. Whenever *êt'* is rendered as the infinitive in this construction, it receives a [t] prefix, except in the third-person plural, where *vont* already supplies a [t] via liaison. It's possible that this prefix is a result of an overzealous emulation of that particular liaison, transferring it to other persons and tenses.

2.6.2 Miscellaneous vocabulary explanations (Lesson 6)

Va à l'aut' manière (77). As Hyde explains in her blurb on progressing through life, someone who *va à l'aut' manière* (literally 'is going to the other way') is middle-aged, making the transition from youth to old age.

Quiendu école (78). *Tenir école* simply means 'to run a school' in SF, where the past participle would be *tenu*. Why does MOF differ here? Well, in the Missouri dialect, the present-tense forms of the verb appear as, for example, *quiens* rather than SF *tiens* due to the previously discussed over-assimilation of palatalized [t]. In addition, though,

MOF appears to regularize the verb by back-forming a new infinitive ?**quiendre*, from which the past participle *quiendu* logically follows.

Paré (79). While *parer* is already a verb in SF, the *paré* appearing in MOF sentences like *Quand c'est vous va t'êt' paré pour charrer tout le temps en français?* ('When are you going to be ready to talk in French all the time?') is likely just a shortening of *préparé* with the removal of a deemphasized first syllable.

2.6.3 Miscellaneous vocabulary without explanations

assaient (SF *essaient*, 'try.3PL.PRES') (77), *bowling alley* (SF *bowling*, 'bowling alley') (77), *marié* (SF *épousé*, 'married') (77), *trailer* (SF *caravane*, 'trailer') (77)

2.7 Lesson 7: Le manger (91)

2.7.1 Shifting French meals (Le matin, on déjeune) (91)

SF has *petit déjeuner*, *déjeuner*, and *dîner* for 'breakfast,' 'lunch,' and 'dinner,' plus *goûter* for 'snack.' In MOF, however, *déjeuner* and *dîner* both move one meal earlier and the old-fashioned-sounding *souper* slides in for the evening meal. In the US, *dinner* traditionally refers to the largest, focal-point meal, and so American English exhibits a great deal of variation between communities that use *lunch* for a midday meal and *dinner* for an evening meal, as opposed to *dinner* for a midday meal and *supper* for an evening meal.

MF appears to emulate the latter convention, as does Louisiana French (LaFleur & Forkner 2005). However, the MOF dialect still adopts the English word *lunch* for a special nighttime snack. Also, Hyde notes that *Le souper c'est quasiment la même chose*

comme le dîner (i.e. ‘Supper is almost the same thing as dinner’) (92).²⁶ One of her discussion questions asks readers whether dinner or supper is a bigger meal at their house, which puts the fine points of this classification up for debate.

2.7.2 Periphrastic verb phrases (J’cheus après rire) (93)

MF uses periphrasis to expand the amount of temporal relationships verbs can express without having to switch to additional tenses. The expression *êt’ après* (lit. ‘to be after’), which is common in Canadian French as well, means ‘to be in the process of,’ similar to SF *être en train de*. Plenty of illustrative applications of this phrase can be found in the “John the Bear” folktale, such as *J’étais après dzire que...* (‘I was in the middle of saying that...’) (Thomas 1981:32). The related *êt’ pour* (lit. ‘to be for’) means ‘to intend to,’ as in *J’étais pour m’marier* (‘I was ready to get married’) (Dorrance 1935; Thomas 1981:151).

Another MOF periphrastic expression, *avoir coutume de*, meaning ‘to usually do,’ is already known in SF. However, it plays a much more significant role in MOF, where (perhaps exaggerating somewhat) Dorrance (1935) noted that it almost completely replaces the imperfect tense.

2.7.3 Miscellaneous vocabulary explanations

Menasse (91). Albert (1979) identified this elusive Franco-American word as ‘molasses’ (SF *mélasse*) in her study of Acadians in Maine.

²⁶ Also note the use of *comme* (‘as’) rather than *que* in the comparative, a difference from SF.

Dompline (91). The final vowel here helps MOF produce a more accurate imitation of English *dumpling* (SF *boulette de pâte / raviole*) than Canadian French's *domplaines* or *dompleines* (Dorrance 1935; Carrière 1939).

Thé du belle-angélique (96). Hyde's practice question *Vous l'as queuds'fouès usé du thé de belle-angélique pour guérir un rhume?* ('Have you ever used sweetflag tea to cure a cold?') will likely confuse anyone who is unfamiliar with sweetflag, or calamus, a flowering plant used medicinally to soothe the stomach (Dorrance 1935). Missouri is on the southern edge of the sweetflag's North American habitat.

Piaux (96). Based on the context, which is Hyde asking if the reader knows something to do to heal the waters of *piaux* (after a question about poison ivy), it seems probable that *piaux* refers to 'ponds' or 'creeks' or another unclean body of water. But this word was entirely absent from the glossaries of Carrière, Dorrance, McDermott, and Thogmartin, and so its exact meaning is difficult to ascertain. A seventeenth-century agricultural dictionary described "l'eau de petits piaux" as a remedy for bad vision (Estienne 1601:52). But, complicating matters further, decades later a catalog of "barbarous" (i.e. dialectal) French defined *piaux* as the entirely unrelated 'newly hatched chickens' (Cotgrave & Miede 1679). The fact is that because of Missouri French's colonial origins, as bizarre as it seems, this sort of Middle French could just as likely be the source of the word, even though it seems so distant from the 1978 dialect.

2.7.4 Miscellaneous vocabulary without explanations

acore (SF *encore*, 'yet') (91), *récipie* (SF *recette*, 'recipe') (95), *oblié* (SF *oublié*, 'forgot') (95)

2.8 Lesson 8: La maisonne (104)

2.8.1 Miscellaneous vocabulary explanations (Lesson 8)

Mouvoir (104). Following the model of English ‘move,’ this verb takes the place of both SF *déménager* (‘to move house’), as seen in Hyde’s text, and SF *bouger* (‘to move [spatially]’), per Carrière 1939, although SF has the rare *mouvoir* as well for this latter meaning. *Mouvoir* also appears in Canadian French.

Faut qu’il fasse sûr (104). *Faire sûr* is a spot-on calque of the English ‘make sure.’ Note also that this is one of the rare appearances of the subjunctive in Hyde’s text.

Bufféttés (105). This is the [t] suffixation rule (2.1.6) applied to SF *buffets* (‘dressers’), similar to *muléttés* from 2.5.3. It’s interesting to note that despite the addition of a traditionally feminine ending, the noun retains its masculine gender: *Quoi c’est on met dedans un buffétté?* (‘What do we put in a dresser?’). This is slightly surprising because the case of *un maison* from Thogmartin 1970 (see the *maisonne* entry in 2.1.11) shows that MOF is willing to alter the genders of SF nouns for consistency’s sake. Regardless, we can tentatively assume the gender is kept constant for other words with newly pronounced final consonants.

2.8.2 Miscellaneous vocabulary without explanations

apartments (SF *appartements*, ‘apartments’) (104), *boutte* (SF *bout*, ‘distance’) (104), *dessour* (SF *dessous*, ‘bottom’) (104), *treuck* (SF *camion*, ‘truck’), *bentôt* (SF *bientôt*, ‘soon’) (104)

3 Conclusion

3.1 What's Missing

Basic French Conversations is a treasure trove of dialectal details, and I hope I've added to its utility by bringing in Carrière and the rest for additional context. But it's far from a complete lexicon. Of course other aspects of Missouri French go unexplained by Hyde's work, especially distinctive vocabulary words that are captured only by other publications, like McDermott 1941. These don't come up in the textbook for a variety of reasons. Some are unsuitable for educational purposes, whether they're vulgar (*beurdache*, 'coward'²⁷ or *bêtasse*, 'stupid woman') or niche (my personal favorite, *tac-tac*, 'popcorn'). Other words we might expect to see in an introductory textbook don't appear because they don't exist at all due to atrophy. Beyond Miller's (1930) technology-driven gaps, Hyde reported that even simple words for 'east,' 'west,' and 'wind' were missing from the dialect completely and she was therefore unable to elicit them outside of English (Thomas 1979). Several grammatical tenses also fail to appear, again because of the informal nature of spoken Missouri French; for instance, even though Dorrance (1935) reported a regularized simple future tense for *aller*, with *je vadrails*, we rarely see the tense at all (as I mentioned in my entry on *ma t'êt'* in **2.6.1**), so there's no chance to confirm if this Missouri innovation remained by the late seventies. Plus, imperatives aren't especially relevant in a scenario where all the speakers are on the same level of society (Dorrance 1935; Thogmartin 1970; Thomas 1979; Rosemary Hyde, pers. comm.).

²⁷ This word has a complicated etymology, arising from a pejorative reference to homosexuality, and eventually came to be attributed to transgender members of Native American communities.

One fact we have no way of knowing is if some linguistic phenomena don't come up as a result of regional or diachronic differences. While I have been largely treating Missouri French as a single monolithic dialect, French's Midwestern speakers were once spread across broad swaths of colonial land from Missouri to Illinois to Indiana. Jourdan Devereaux, who plans to publish a modern dialectal textbook and teach classes as part of the current iteration of Illinois Country French Preservation Inc., chooses to refer to his subject of study as "River Creole French." Just within Missouri, recall that Dorrance titled his study *The Survival of French in the Old District of Sainte Genevieve*, invoking the name of the once-prominent colonial town that would lose its Francophone population in the face of waves of German and English migration, as Old Mines maintained its isolation. Even in the direct vicinity of Old Mines itself, there was once regional variation, now long-forgotten (Rosemary Hyde, pers. comm.). Due largely to the dwindling regional footprint of the French-speaking population, therefore, Hyde's *Basic French Conversations* represents a much narrower group of speakers than earlier publications would have.

This relates directly to another key area of inquiry that has been unfortunately underresearched in the Missouri French canon: change over time. Hyde lamented that in Thogmartin's dissertation, which was "based on a relatively short period of field work," he "chose to treat his data and those of Carrière... synchronically, as this tends to obliterate some of the information that could have been obtained on the evolution of the Old Mines dialect during the intervening time" (Thomas 1979:14-16). But Hyde herself also neglected to engage in such comparisons, as diachronic analysis wasn't her primary

area of interest, nor was Carrière her primary reference. In fact, if she could have researched any additional aspect of the dialect, she says she would have attempted to trace certain dialectal phrases to their regions of origin in France (Rosemary Hyde, pers. comm.). By now, anyway, the limited fluency and dwindling numbers of the speech community have perhaps made such a study prohibitively difficult. Though I have commented on potential examples of diachronic change when possible, using the folktales as a guide (see my mention of *squé* in 2.1.3, for instance), Missouri French has been so understudied that most research must make considerable assumptions about intergenerational consistency to draw any sort of conclusions about the dialect.

3.2 What's to Come

I have spoken in rather bleak terms about the future of Missouri French, but in truth I refer only to the future of people actually speaking the dialect. In fact, there is no shortage of French pride among the citizens of Old Mines, who host a *fête* commemorating their colonial past every year (along with other events such as a “French Heritage Seminar”). Under the stewardship of the Old Mines Area Historical Society, they present to visitors, some from as far away as Normandy, a commodified, public-facing fusion of modern Missourian and historical French cultures, featuring woven baskets with St. Louis Blues logos and gooey butter cake-flavored lip balm. “La Marseillaise,” “The Star-Spangled Banner,” and “La Marcha Real” play one after another. The star of the show is Dennis Stroughmatt, the public face of Old Mines, a gifted violinist who touts himself as the youngest fluent Missouri French speaker and has

performed local folk music at the Library of Congress. Through his work alone, bits and pieces of the dialect will be preserved for as long as people keep singing.

Illinois Country French Preservation Inc. has also pushed on, with Alire at the helm alongside Devereaux and his forthcoming textbook. Currently, Alire offers private lessons in the dialect over Skype, with physical and online classes both marked as “coming soon,” a step back from when classes were ongoing in St. Louis several years ago. The group has made available for download an assortment of Missouri French documents, including Carrière’s folktales, and maintained an active Facebook page and “practice group.” It is one of many Facebook groups dedicated to French culture in the region, including the Historical Society’s informative official page and one run by the University of Memphis’s Will Thompson entitled “Old Mines French.” Thompson has maintained an unofficial page on the history of Old Mines, including an incredibly comprehensive bibliography of resources about the region’s cultural history.

Each of these projects plays a critical role in ensuring that the Missouri French dialect lives on in some form. In my mind, however, (and I don’t expect Devereaux to top this without the same level of access to native speakers), *Basic French Conversations* is the key to introducing inquisitive minds to the long-dormant language variety. Its familiar structure and pleasant illustrations complement Hyde’s rigorous research and careful consensus-building. Through this project, I hope I’ve supplied a supplement of my own, one providing an additional bit of context and clarity and perhaps encouraging further research, so that Missouri French might remain, for as long as possible, *toujours icitte*.

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²⁸ Thompson's "Old Mines bibliography" on the same site was also an extremely useful resource for discovering new academic works, and helped me gather citations for my own bibliography by supplying publication info and page numbers for works to which I had limited access (e.g. interlibrary loans), especially Dorrance 1935, Thomas 1979, Hull 1979, Valdman 2005, and Vézina 2005.