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Language Maintenance and Transmission: The Case of Cajun French

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Language maintenance and transmission: the case of Cajun French

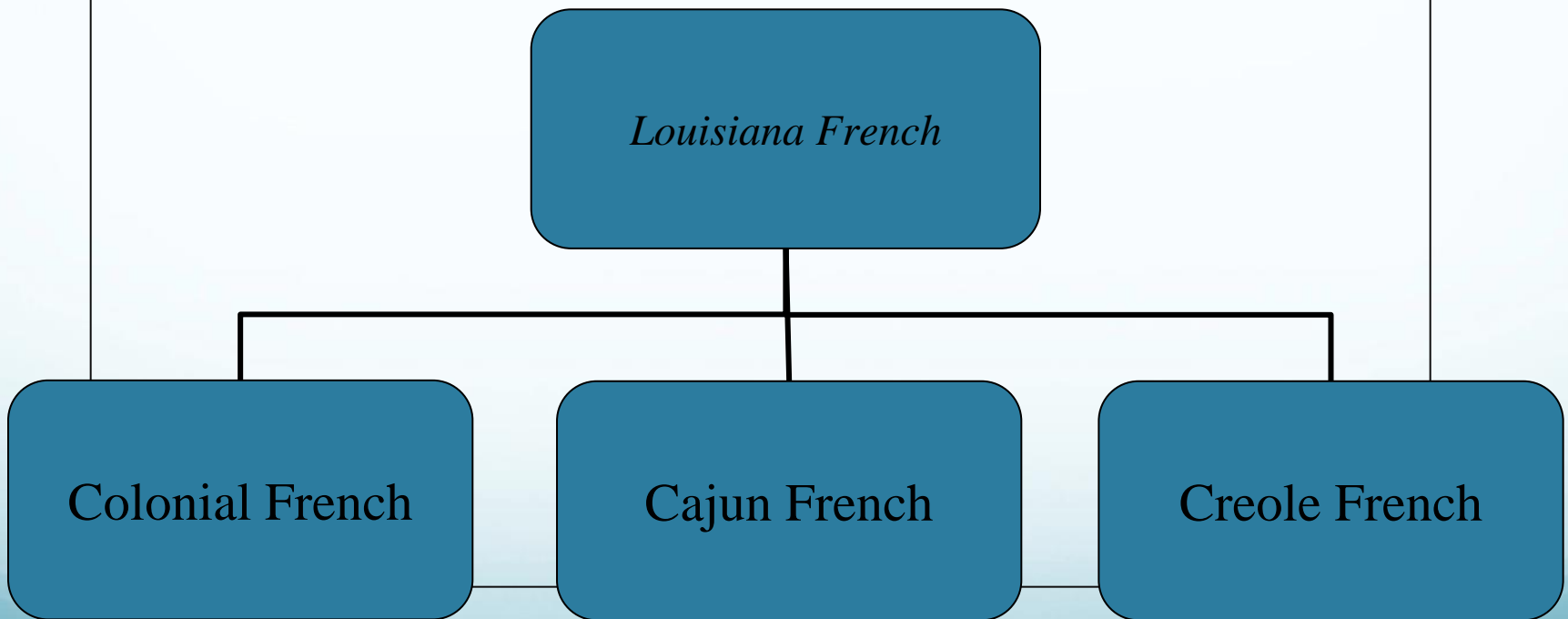
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Historical facts

- ✕ Louisiana: A French colony from **1682 to 1803**.
- ✕ **French speaking population:**
 - ✕ the French colonists
 - ✕ the African slaves
 - ✕ the Cajuns

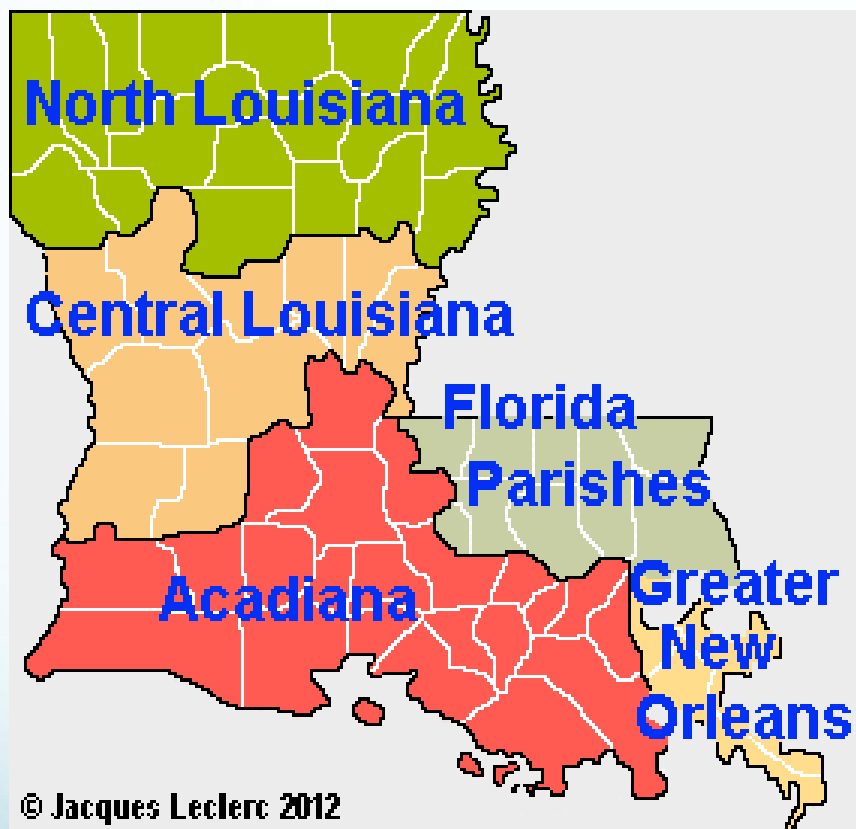
Louisiana French

Three French varieties coexist in a form of a **continuum** (Picone & Valdman, 2005).



Colonial French	Cajun French	Creole French
<p>Is traditionally said to have been the form of French spoken in the early days of settlement in the lower Mississippi River valley.</p> <p>Was once the language of the educated land-owning classes.</p> <p>Presented as the “norm”.</p>	<p>Derived from Acadian French (introduced with the arrival of Acadian immigrants in the 17th century after the Great Expulsion of the Acadians).</p> <p>Many Acadians settled in lower Louisiana, where they became known as Cajuns</p> <p>Their dialect was regarded as the typical language of the lower white classes.</p>	<p>Developed as the language of the black community.</p> <p>Close to creoles from Haïti and West Indies. (Breton, 1979)</p> <p>Is called:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<i>black creole</i> (Thibodeaux, 1977), •<i>parler « nègre »</i> (Guidry, 1997), •<i>Neg French, gumbo, vini-couri , patois noir</i> (Dubois, 1998)

Cajun French



- French language banished at school until the 60's.
- Oral transmission of the language at home (traditional folksongs and life skills).

<http://www.tlfq.ulaval.ca/AXL/amnord/images/Louisiane-Acadiana-map.gif>

Cajun music



Beausoleil & Mickael Doucet

Tourism



Council for the Development of French in Louisiana (Codofil).



- × Created in 1968
- × State agency
- × “**French**” language and culture preservation and expansion in Louisiana
- × Supported by French, Belgian and Quebec Governments
- × French education program in public schools
- × “Continental French”

How can Cajun French be passed on to children in order to maintain the language ?

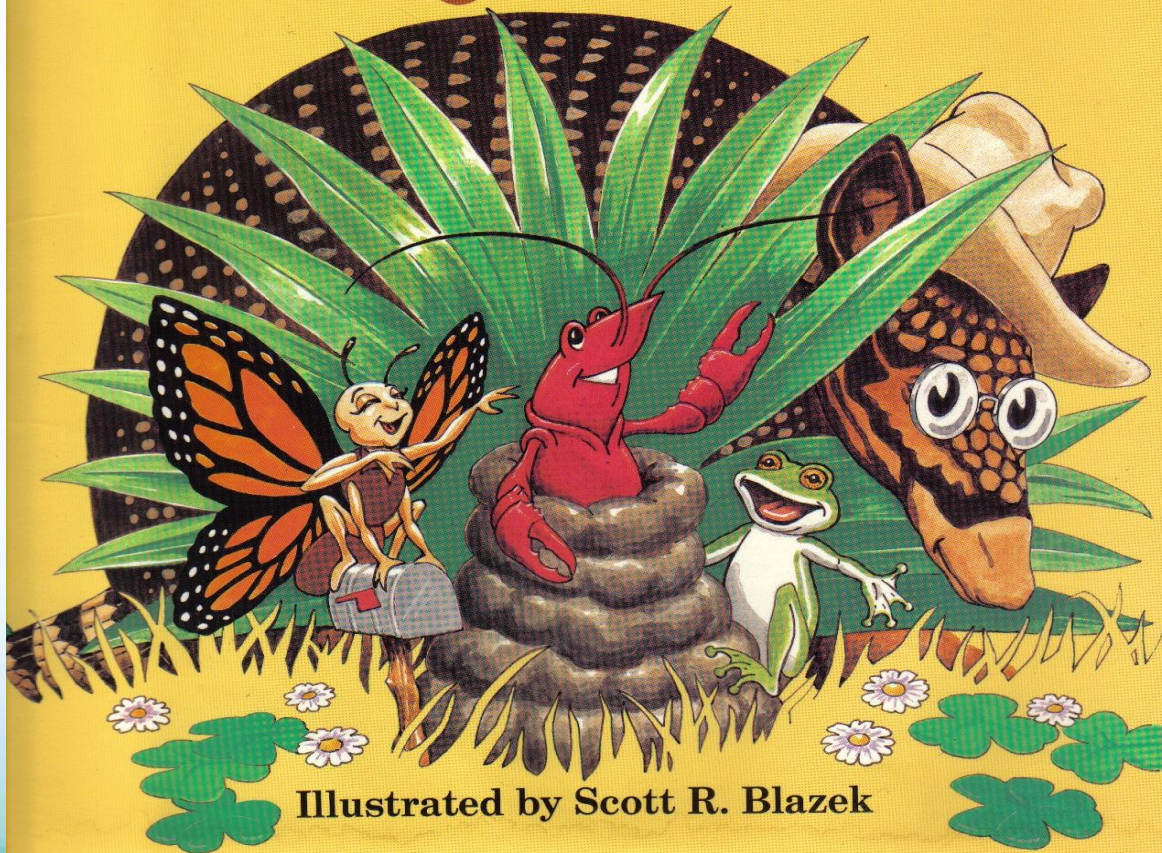
- ✕ Research framework:
- ✕ Methods of data collection:
 - ✕ primary sources (classrooms observation in Elementary Schools, semi-structured interviews, questionnaires)
 - ✕ secondary sources (govt. publications, archives, census etc...)
- ✕ Personal experience in Louisiana and as a teacher of French as a foreign language
- ✕ Research-action model

A few issues...

- ✕ Who is going to teach French at school ?
- ✕ Which variety(s) of French?
- ✕ What is the position of French teachers regarding the Cajun dialect?
- ✕ How to introduce Cajun French in the classes?

Mary Alice Fontenot

Clovis Crawfish and the Big Bétail

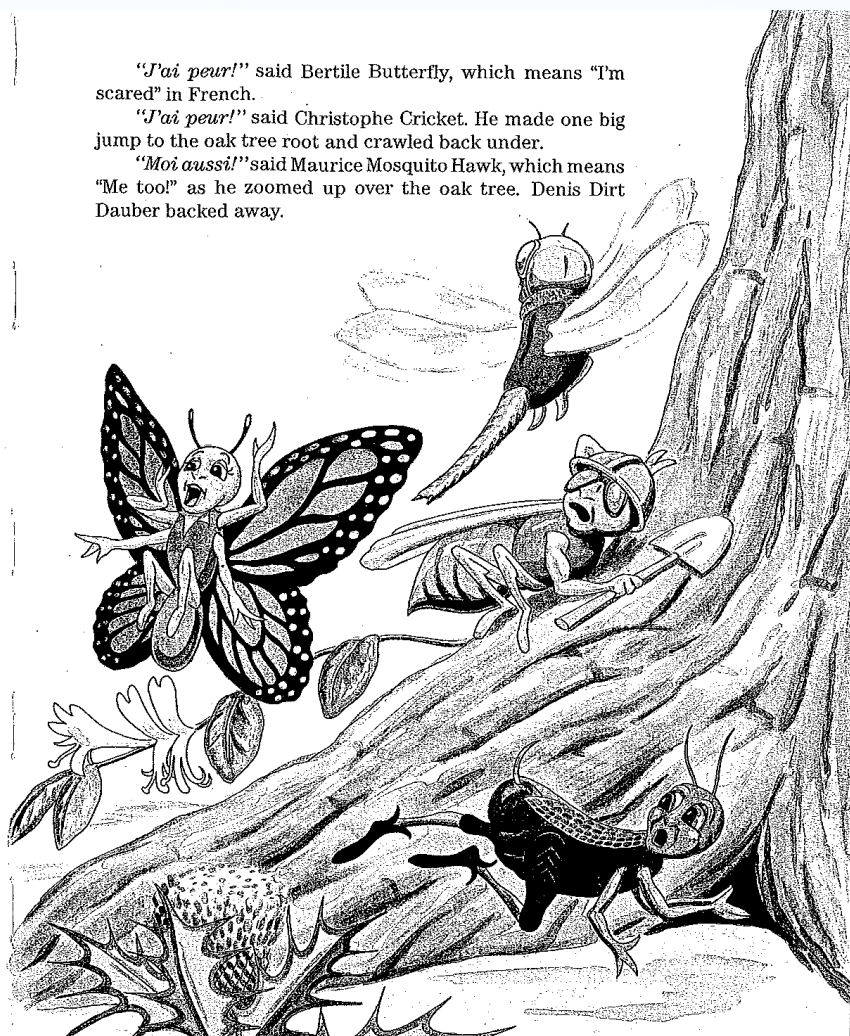


Illustrated by Scott R. Blazek



Andrew put his long pointed nose almost on the ground. "Now, there I went and did it again," he said. "I sure didn't mean to hurt your feelings. I just wouldn't do that for all the dollars in Dallas!"

Suddenly Andrew stood up on his back legs and held himself straight up with his long, hard tail so that he could look all around the swamp. He looked very big and frightening.



"*J'ai peur!*" said Bertile Butterfly, which means "I'm scared" in French.

"*J'ai peur!*" said Christophe Cricket. He made one big jump to the oak tree root and crawled back under.

"*Moi aussi!*" said Maurice Mosquito Hawk, which means "Me too!" as he zoomed up over the oak tree. Denis Dirt Dauber backed away.

✕ I also think that French in Louisiana has evolved to describe and operate in a reality which is specific to Louisiana. It's not the reality of France, and it's not the reality of Quebec or the West Indies. It would be ideal if Louisianans could teach French in schools, but this is not possible. The next best thing is to give documents to foreign teachers and encourage them to introduce vocabulary items and especially to teach some vocabulary.

✕ (Richard Guidry, interview in May 2006, Lafayette)

C comme Cocodril (*Alligator mississippiensis*)



Dans la plus grande photo, le cocodril est couché parmi les boscoyos de cipre. Souvent on ne lui voit que la tête qui sort de l'eau et il a l'air d'un tronc d'arbres à la surface de l'eau. Dans les Paroisses La Fourche et Terrebonne, on appelle cet animal "caïman d'eau douce", ce qui est un meilleur nom pour l'alligator que "cocodril". Le mot "cocodril" vient du mot espagnol "*cocodrilo*" pour nommer le crocodile.

Alphabet cadien, R. Guidry (2005)

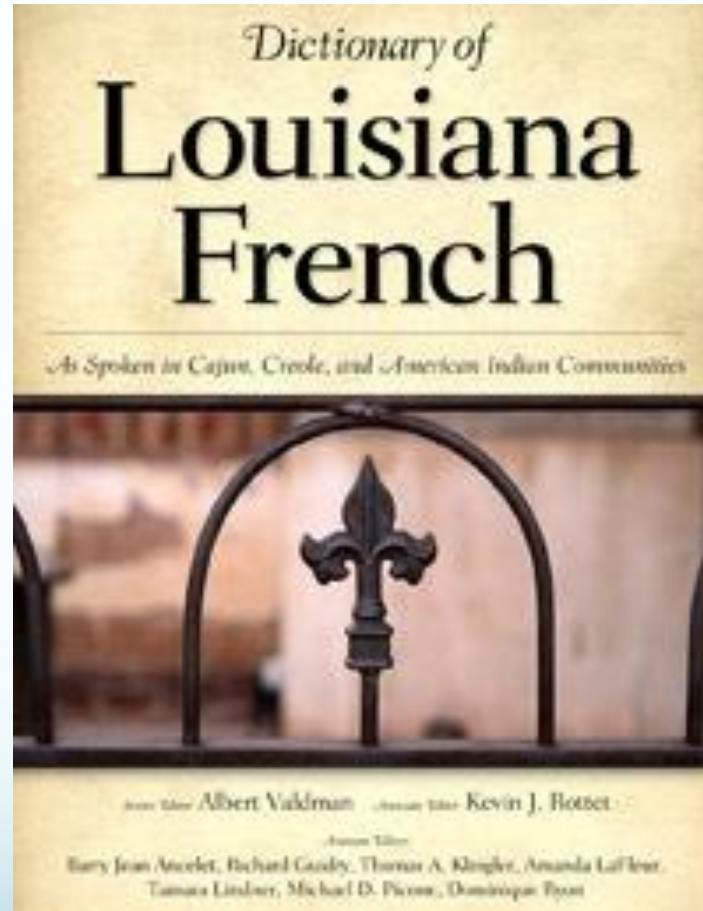


Cajun French	Standard French	English
Bayou	Marais	Swamp
Eloise	Eclair	Thunder
Ouaouaron	Crapaud	Toad
Tête de pluie	Gros nuage	Big cloud

Consequences

- ✕ Maintenance and transmission of Cajun French
- ✕ Legitimation and recognition of Cajun French
- ✕ Standardization of Cajun French

Dictionary of Louisiana French



a, a' ♦see alle

à [a] (contractions: à + art.def. le = au [o], à + art.def.pl. les = aux [o, oz]) prep. **1** to *C'est du monde païen. Eusse va pas à l'église.* They are heathens. They don't go to church. (LF) **J'ai su par après que Henri avait été renvoyé en France, à une place nommée Belle Ile.* I found out afterward that Henri had been sent to France, to a place called Belle Ile. (Ang8) *Quand on a déménagé back au village.* When we moved back to the city. (IB) *On va au swimming pool.* We go to the swimming pool. (TB) **2** at *Il y avait une file de monde au picture show.* There was a line of people at the movies. (EV) *Il s'a trouvé à l'autre bout du lac sans pagaïlle pour son bateau.* He found himself at the other end of the lake without a paddle for his boat. (Gu00) *J'ai été passer une semaine à leur maison.* I went to spend a week at their home. (TB) **3** in *Labourer au milieu du clos.* Plowing in the middle of the field. (LA) *Sa fête qu'eusse avait fêté, là-bas c'est au parc l'autre bord.* His birthday that they celebrated, that was in the park on the other side. (TB) *Je fréquente pas assez souvent les affaires à Eunice.* I don't go to the events in Eunice very often. (LA) **4** at, in (a time) *Venez à bonne heure.* Come early. (Lv88) *À soir.* In the evening. (Lv88) **A la brune.* At dusk. (Da84) *Je débauchais à midi.* I used to get off work at noon. (LF) *Ils se sont fiancés au printemps.* They became engaged in the spring. (LA) **5** at the rate of, per **A la journée.* By the day. (Da84) **A la livre.* By the pound. (Da84) **6** at a distance of *A quatre-vingts arpents d'ici.* Eighty acres from here. (VM) **A dix miles à la ronde.* For 10 miles around. (Da84) **7** (with indirect object) to *J'ai ramassé deux plats d'haricots pour donner à mes deux belles-sœurs.* I gathered two plates of beans to give to my two sisters-in-law. (LF) *Il voulait me passer ses traitements et tout parce que il avait personne d'autre qui voulait, et il voulait le passer à quelqu'un.* He wanted to pass his treatments on to me and all because there was no one else who wanted them, and he wanted to hand them on to somebody. (SJ) **8** of, belonging to *Le char à Tom.* Tom's car. (Lv88) *La femme à Edouard, elle avait déménagé.* Edward's wife, she had moved out. (SL) **9** son of, wife of, etc. (used to distinguish a person with a common first name) *Louis à Thomas.* Louis, son of Thomas. (Lv88) *Mary à Burton.* Burton's wife, Mary. (EV) **12** for, intended for *Je pêche juste des cages à*

des fusils à chasser. We use guns to hunt. (JE) **10** by, with (an instrument, technique, or means) *Les cannes, c'était chargé à la main ça.* Cane was loaded by hand. (TB) *On pourrait peut-être aller se promener à la pagaïlle.* Maybe we could go for a ride paddling [in a pirogue]. (LF) **11** with **Un homme à barbe blanche.* A white-bearded man. (Da84) **Café au lait.* Coffee with milk. (Da84) *Fusil à six coups.* Six-shooter. (Da84) <Loc: EV, IB, JE, LA, LF, SJ, SL, SM, TB, VM, Ang4, Ang8, Da84, Hio2, Lv88>

abaisser [abese] **I** v.tr. **1** to lower (e.g. one's judgment, one's opinion) *Mon opinion de lui a été abaissée.* My opinion of him has been lowered. (EV) **2** to humiliate, degrade *Il a abaissé sa femme devant tout le monde.* He humiliated his wife in front of everyone. (VM) **II** s'abaisser v.pron. to lower o.s., humble o.s. **C'était pas bien s'appeler créole. Plutôt que d'te relever, tu t'abaissais.* It wasn't good to call yourself Creole. Rather than raising yourself, you lowered yourself. (Gr86) <Loc: EV, VM, Da84, Gr86>

abaïssir (s') [abesir] v.pron. to lower one's dignity or moral standing *Tu t'abaïssis quand tu dis ça.* You lower yourself when you say that. (AV) <Loc: AV>

abajoue [abajou] n.f. cheek pouch <Loc: Da84, Lv88>

abajoue ♦see **bajoue**

abalourdîr [abalurdîr] v.tr. to bore, weary, tire *Il m'abalourdît avec ses sottises.* He bores me with his nonsense. (Lv88) <Loc: Da84, Lv88>

abandon [abādɔ̃, ābādɔ̃] n.m. abandonment, destitution, ruin *Ça va à l'abandon.* That is going to ruin. (JE) <Loc: JE, Da84>

abandonner [abādɔ̃ne, ābādɔ̃ne] **I** v.tr. **1** to abandon, desert *Une petite maison que mon défunt pape avait abandonnée.* A little house that my late father had abandoned. (TB) **2** to give up, renounce *Mais eux-autres voulait abandonner les juges de paix et les constables parce que c'est tout outdated.* But they wanted to give up justices of the peace and constables because that was all outdated. (LF) **3** to quit, stop, cease *Il a abandonné travailler.* He quit work. (Lv88) **II** v.intr. to quit, stop, cease *Il a abandonné de boire.* He stopped drinking. (JE) **III** s'abandonner v.pron. to neglect o.s., let o.s. go to pot *Depuis que son mari est mort, elle s'a abandonné.* Since her husband's death, she let herself go to pot. (VM) **0** ♦s'abandonner à to yield to, give in to, give o.s. up to *Il s'a abandonné à la boisson.* He gave in to drinking. (LA) <LA> <Loc: JE, LA, LF, SL, TB, VM, Da84, Lv88, Wh83>

abasourdîr [abasurdîr] v.tr. to stun, astound, stupefy *La nouvelle de sa mort m'a abasurdî.* The news of his death stunned me. (VM) <Loc: VM, Da84>

abâtardi, -e (bâtardi, -e) [abatardi, batardi] adj. **1** hybrid (of plants) *Du maïs abâtardi.* Hybrid corn. (Lv88) **2** crossbred,

Conclusion

- ✕ Continental French “à la sauce Cajun”
- ✕ Contextualized lessons, Cajun vocabulary
- ✕ What about Louisiana Creole French at school?

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