

Re: History of French

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From: Nathan Sanders (*nsanders.DIE.SPAM_at_wso.williams.edu*)

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In article <cjlg5f\$35m6@odds.stat.purdue.edu>, hrubin@odds.stat.purdue.edu (Herman Rubin) wrote:

- > >If native speakers of language *L* say *X* in *L*, then *X* is correct in *L*.
- > >*X* is not necessarily correct in a different language (which includes
- > >the standard form of *L*), of course,.
- >
- > Which native speakers? According to this, there would be
- > dozens of different "English" languages.

One English idiolect per native speaker of the abstract language we call "English", in fact. That idiolects may be mutually intelligible doesn't mean they aren't different.

For me, "language" is "the shared speech patterns of a group of people". In the special case of a group of size 1, the language is also called an idiolect.

Larger groups require some level of abstraction (averaging over speakers, factoring in variability, etc.). Obviously, if you get a group of people who aren't all mutually intelligible "enough", you'll end up with an impoverished set of speech patterns that wouldn't be suitable for normal human communication.

(One could arguably use "suitable for normal human communication" as a diagnostic for dividing "languages" from "dialects". I don't particularly care about that distinction, since there isn't yet an accepted consensus on what it really mean.)

- > *This is the "modern" version of social science brought in*
- > *by the socialist educationists,*

Socialist? Which kind? (Not that it really matters, because I'm not quite sure I'd be labelled a socialist. I'm pretty happy with semi-regulated competitive capitalism.)

What do one's economic (or political) leanings have to do with the study of linguistic data, anyway?

- > *that there is nothing*
- > *which can be called "right".*

I'm not sure I follow your logic here. How does my definition above not make a distinction between "correct" and "incorrect", either for individuals or for groups? (The boundary may be fuzzy, but there are certainly things that are unquestionably "correct" and things that are unquestionably "incorrect", both for individuals and for groups.)

- > *They extend it to everything*
- > *else, which is why education has gone downhill.*

This is just the typical (and very tired) doom and gloom that has plagued society for generation after generation: old farts gripe that young'uns are ruining everything, that civilization is going down the toilet, that things were better 50 years ago, yadda yadda yadda. This has been going on for as long as civilizations have had grandparents with teenage grandchildren.

Nathan

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Nathan Sanders
Linguistics Program
Williams College
Williamstown, MA 01267

nsanders@wso.williams.edu
<http://wso.williams.edu/~nsanders>