Transmission and dynamics of the Crescent languages

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The Crescent area

- Situated on the Northern Fringe of the Massif Central (France)
- Has a form of a half moon (a ‘crescent’)

- The local gallo-romance dialects simultaneously display typical features of:
  - Oïl varieties (French, Poitevin-Saintongeais, Berrichon...)
  - Oc varieties (Limousin in the west and Auvergnat in the east)

- Crescent dialects are often called
  - ‘Marchois’ (~ ‘Marchese’) on the Limousin side
  - ‘Bourbonnais’ on the Auvergnat side

- Crescent area = dialect continuum
  - Variation is very great
    (especially on a north-south axis)
  - More than 20km → intercomprehension may be difficult
The Crescent area
The Crescent area
Linguistic history of the Crescent

- Crescent = endangered languages
  - Nearly all speakers = bilingual since the 19th Century

- Local dialects remained the vernacular language until the middle of the 20th century

- After WW2, “process of disappearing” = breaking the line of generational transmission

- Language policy in France
Current sociolinguistic situation

• Typology of speakers:

  > 70 yr. = native and fluent speakers

  40-70 yr. = terminal speakers
  (some passive knowledge
  and very limited productive skills)

  < 40 yr. = French monolinguals

(Austin & Sallabank 2011)
Current sociolinguistic situation

- Languages of oral tradition
  - No written literature (except some recent texts)
  - No literary or standard language

- Each one speak her/his own dialect
  - The few existing texts are all written in specific dialect

- These dialects are not taught in schools
  - family transmission only
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Local organisations

• Speakers are welcoming with great enthusiasm initiatives for their dialects
  - as those of the project “The Linguistic Crescent” (Quint & Guérin 2017)

• Local initiatives
  - Isolated local initiatives (texts, lexicons...)
  - Local groups working on a lexicon (Luchapt, Châteauponsac)
  - Language course (Saint-Agnant-de-Versillat)
  - Sketches and songs (Parsac)

• Meetings bringing together speakers from all Crescent area, every year in Creuse
  - Fursac, Parsac, La Celle-Dunoise, Crozant, La Souterraine...
Local organisations
Local organisations

- Part of association: **La Traverse**
  - Creation: 2013
- Area: Luchapt (Vienne) and adjacent municipalities
- Members: ~10 (75 years on average) / not all fluent speakers
- Objectives: preserve the "patois"
  - Activities: meetings (lexicon & chitchat), visits to a retirement home
  - Audience: ~10
- Diversity: diversity taken into account, no standard
- Orthography: french-based
- Press: several articles (La Nouvelle République)
- Radio: -
- TV: no
- Website: no (not scheduled)
- Social networks: no (not scheduled)
Local organisations

- Association: **Anam causar a Feurçac** (We go to speak to Fursac)  
  Creation: 2018
- Area: Fursac (Creuse) and adjacent municipalities
- Members: 28 (70 years on average) / not all speakers (but learning)
- Objectives: preserve/promote the "patois"

- Activities: songs (guests), readings, other activities
- Audience: 70 pers. max

- Diversity: diversity taken into account, no standard
- Orthography: classical Occitan (adapted reading)

- Press: several articles (La Montagne)
- Radio: announcements (France Bleue Creuse)
- TV: no

- Website: no (not scheduled)
- Social networks: no (not scheduled)
• Association: **Si N’ Causavan** (If We Talked)  
• Area: Parsac (Creuse) and adjacent municipalities
• Members: 58 (75 years on average) / not all speakers (but all understand)
• Objectives: preserve/transmit the "patois"

• Activities: meetings, talks local history/culture, choir, shows, concerts, visits to retirement homes
• Audience: 70 to 500 pers. max

• Diversity: diversity taken into account, no standard
• Orthography: french-based

• Press: several articles (La Montagne, L’Echo du Berry)
• Radio: announcements (France Bleue Creuse)
• TV: no

• Website: no (not scheduled)
• Social networks: no (not scheduled)
Local organisations

• Association: **Naves Expo**
• Area: Naves (Allier) and adjacent municipalities
• Members: 5 (60 years on average) / not all speakers
• Objectives: promote the local History and heritage ("patois" is a part of this heritage)

• Activities: visits in the local museum
• Audience: 2 to 15 pers. max (small museum)

• Diversity: diversity taken into account, no standard
• Orthography: thorough french-based

• Press: some articles (La Montagne)
• Radio: some (RCF)
• TV: some (FR3)

• Website: https://naves-expo-en-bourbonnais.blog4ever.com/
• Social networks: no (Facebook scheduled)
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Local transmission & dynamics

- No direct transmission
  - no language course (except Saint-Agnant)

- No standard (to teach)
  - diversity always taken into account
  - no clearly established and/or common orthography

- Young generations rarely involved
  - barely no children or teenagers in audience

- Few written materials (books) (except Naves)
Local transmission & dynamics

- Classical Media
  - Press: several articles in local newspapers
  - Radio: only self-announcements
  - TV: barely nothing

- Internet
  - Website: no (not scheduled by most)
  - Social networks: no (not scheduled by most)

- Use of Media
  - Mainly to announce or present ad hoc activities
  - Seldom to present all activities & works
  - Never to build a community or create courses
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Conclusion

- Despite a growing public enthusiasm, local initiatives have little broad impact will not be able to stop the progressive process of disappearing

- Preserving but not transmitting
- No enough language teaching skills
- No enough new media skills
Conclusion

• No broad support
  – 😊 Municipalities
  – 😊 Local press
  – 😞 Local radios
  – 😞 Bigger public institutions
  – 😞 TV

  - Difficulties to grow and develop
References


Thank you for your attention!

Do you have any questions?