
Using French

A guide to contemporary usage

R. E. BATCHELOR

Formerly of the University of Nottingham

M. H. OFFORD

Reader in French Language, University of Nottingham



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, United Kingdom

<http://www.cup.cam.ac.uk>

40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA

<http://www.cup.org>

10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain

© Cambridge University Press 1982, 1993

Third edition © R. E. Batchelor and M. H. Offord 2000

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1982

Fifth printing 1991

Second edition 1993

Fourth printing 1998

Third edition 2000

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

Typeset in 10½/12pt Bembo in QuarkXPress™ [SE]

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 0 521 64177 2 hardback

ISBN 0 521 64593 X paperback

Contents

Foreword	xi
Foreword to second edition	xii
Foreword to third edition	xiii
Abbreviations	xiv
1 Register	1
1.1 Varieties of language	1
1.2 Peripheral factors	2
1.3 Central factors	2
1.3.1 Field	2
1.3.2 Purpose	2
1.3.3 Medium	3
1.3.4 Register	3
1.4 Register as used in this book	5
1.5 Illustration of register	7
1.5.1 Pronunciation and liaison	8
1.5.2 Vocabulary and grammar	11
1.6 Passages illustrating levels of register	19
1.6.1 <i>A la sortie du cinéma</i>	19
1.6.2 <i>Une agence de voyages</i>	21
1.6.3 Part of a debate organised by <i>L'Express</i>	23
1.6.4 Passage from de Gaulle's <i>Mémoires</i>	25
1.6.5 Passage from Albert Camus' <i>La Peste</i>	26
1.6.6 Passages from <i>Le Monde</i> and <i>Libération</i>	27
2 Vocabulary	31
2.1 Misleading similarities: deceptive cognates	31
2.1.1 Deceptive cognates proper	31
2.1.2 Partial deceptive cognates	37
2.2 Homonyms and ambiguity	38
2.2.1 Homonyms differentiated by gender but with identical spelling	39
2.2.2 Homonyms differentiated by both gender and spelling	42
2.2.3 Homonyms differentiated by spelling only	43

Contents

2.2.4	Homonyms with no external distinction either of gender or spelling	44
2.2.5	Words with more than one meaning: incommensurability of French and English	45
2.2.5.1	French examples	45
2.2.5.2	English examples	49
2.3	Paronyms	52
2.4	Synonyms and words with related meanings	80
	Semantic frames	80
2.5	Complex verbal expressions	129
2.6	Idioms, similes and proverbs	134
2.6.1	Idioms	134
2.6.2	Similes	141
2.6.3	Proverbs	142
2.6.4	Expressions involving colours	142
2.6.5	Idioms/expressions involving numbers	146
2.7	Proper names	153
2.7.1	Personal names	153
2.7.2	Names of towns	155
2.7.3	Pronunciation	156
2.8	Abbreviations	157
2.8.1	General	157
2.8.2	<i>Petites annonces</i>	163
2.8.3	Truncation	164
2.9	Latin expressions	167
2.10	Interjections, fillers, transition words and forms of address	169
2.10.1	Interjections	169
2.10.2	Fillers	172
2.10.3	Transition words	173
2.10.4	Forms of address	174
2.11	Differences in measurements, etc.	175
2.11.1	Distance	176
2.11.2	Weight	177
2.11.3	Area	177
2.11.4	Volume	177
2.11.5	Temperature	177
2.11.6	Currency	178
2.11.7	Time	178
2.11.8	Telephone	178
2.11.9	Clothing sizes	179
2.11.10	Numerals	179
2.12	Semi-technical vocabulary	179
2.12.1	<i>La Banque</i>	180
2.12.2	<i>Les Assurances</i>	181
2.12.3	<i>Les Impôts</i>	182
2.12.4	<i>L'Informatique</i>	184
2.12.5	<i>La Sécurité sociale</i>	185

2.12.6	<i>Le Commerce</i>	186
2.12.7	<i>La Justice</i>	188
2.13	Miscellaneous matters concerning vocabulary	191
2.13.1	Frequency of occurrence	191
2.13.2	Spelling	192
2.13.3	Creation of compound words	192
2.13.4	Verlan	194
3	Grammar	195
3.1	Gender	195
3.1.1	Rules of gender	195
3.1.1.1	Simple nouns (ie non-compounds)	195
3.1.1.2	Compound nouns (unhyphenated and hyphenated)	197
3.1.2	Difficult cases	198
3.1.3	Doubtful and variable genders	199
3.1.4	Names of boats, cars, aeroplanes and watches, letters and numbers etc	200
3.1.5	Names of towns	201
3.1.6	Sex and gender	201
3.2	Number	202
3.2.1	Formation of plurals	202
3.2.1.1	Simple words (ie non-compounds)	202
3.2.1.2	Compound words	204
3.2.1.3	Foreign words	205
3.2.1.4	Proper names	206
3.2.1.5	Singular subject but plural verb	207
3.2.2	Differing usages between French and English	207
3.2.3	Use of the partitive article before an adjective preceding a plural noun	210
3.3	Word order	210
3.3.1	Adjectives and word order	210
3.3.1.1	Normal usage	210
3.3.1.2	Adjectives which change their meaning according to their position	211
3.3.1.3	Adjectives which may occur either before or after a noun	214
3.3.1.4	Miscellaneous matters	216
3.3.2	Adverbs and word order	217
3.3.3	Personal pronouns and word order	219
3.3.4	Inversion	220
3.3.5	Interrogatives and word order	222
3.3.6	Exclamations and word order	223
3.3.7	Highlighting	224
3.4	Prepositions	225
3.4.1	verb + preposition	226
3.4.1.1	verb + preposition + infinitive	226

	3.4.1.2	verb + preposition + noun/pronoun	230
	3.4.1.3	verb + direct object + preposition + infinitive	232
	3.4.1.4	verb + preposition + noun/pronoun + preposition + infinitive	232
	3.4.1.5	verb + direct object + preposition + noun/pronoun	233
3.4.2		noun/adjective + preposition + infinitive	235
	3.4.2.1	noun + preposition + infinitive	235
	3.4.2.2	adjective + preposition + infinitive	236
3.4.3		Varying prepositions	237
3.4.4		Prepositional expressions	245
	3.4.4.1	French prepositions	245
	3.4.4.2	English prepositions	261
3.4.5		Different constructions in French and English	271
	3.4.5.1	French verb + direct object = English verb + preposition + noun/pronoun	272
	3.4.5.2	French verb + preposition + noun/pronoun = English verb + direct object	273
3.5		Negation	273
	3.5.1	Negative words and expressions	273
		3.5.1.1 <i>Non</i>	273
		3.5.1.2 <i>Pas</i>	274
		3.5.1.3 <i>Plus</i>	275
		3.5.1.4 <i>Jamais</i>	275
		3.5.1.5 <i>Que</i>	276
		3.5.1.6 <i>Ni . . . ni</i>	276
		3.5.1.7 <i>Personne, rien, aucun</i>	276
		3.5.1.8 Combinations of negative words	277
	3.5.2	The negation of infinitives	277
	3.5.3	Negation and register	278
	3.5.4	Superfluous <i>ne</i>	279
3.6		Verbs	280
	3.6.1	Tenses	280
		3.6.1.1 Present time	280
		3.6.1.2 Future time	281
		3.6.1.3 Past time	282
		3.6.1.4 Sequence of tenses	286
		3.6.1.5 Other differences between French and English tense usages	288
	3.6.2	The infinitive	289
	3.6.3	Participles	290
		3.6.3.1 Present participles	290
		3.6.3.2 Past participles	290
		3.6.3.3 A difference between French and English usages	291
	3.6.4	Formation of compound tenses	291
		3.6.4.1 Use of <i>avoir</i> and <i>être</i> to form compound tenses	291

	3.6.4.2	Agreement of past participles in compound tenses	292
	3.6.5	Reflexive versus non-reflexive forms of the same verb	293
	3.6.6	Verbs of movement in French and English	295
3.7	Subjunctive mood		296
	3.7.1	Sequence of tenses with subjunctive in subordinate clause	296
	3.7.2	'Black and white' subjunctive	297
	3.7.2.1	– in certain archaic set expressions	297
	3.7.2.2	– at the beginning of a sentence to indicate surprise, an order or a desire	297
	3.7.2.3	– to mark hypothesis/conditional value	298
	3.7.2.4	– when a noun clause introduced by <i>que</i> precedes the main clause (in R3 speech only)	298
	3.7.2.5	– to express 'whoever', 'whatever', 'wherever', etc	298
	3.7.2.6	– after certain conjunctive expressions	298
	3.7.2.7	– in clauses dependent upon verbs and expressions indicating desiring, wishing, begging, ordering, forbidding, preventing	299
	3.7.2.8	– in clauses dependent upon verbs and expressions indicating a feeling	300
	3.7.2.9	– in clauses dependent upon verbs and expressions indicating denial, doubt, evaluation, impossibility, necessity, possibility	301
	3.7.2.10	– in clauses dependent upon a superlative formed with <i>plus</i> or <i>moins</i>	302
	3.7.2.11	– in clauses dependent upon verbs and expressions indicating chance	302
	3.7.3	'Grey' subjunctive	302
	3.7.3.1	– in clauses dependent upon a superlative and similar expressions	303
	3.7.3.2	– in clauses dependent upon a negative or indefinite antecedent	303
	3.7.3.3	– in clauses dependent upon expressions denying and questioning certainty, probability	304
	3.7.3.4	– in clauses dependent upon verbs of thinking and declaring in the interrogative and/or negative	304
	3.7.3.5	– in clauses dependent upon certain expressions	304
	3.7.4	Avoiding the subjunctive	305
	3.7.4.1	– when the main and dependent clauses have the same subject	305
	3.7.4.2	– with certain prepositional phrases	305
3.8	Pronouns		306
	3.8.1	Second person pronouns	306

Contents

3.8.2	Third person pronouns	308
3.8.2.1	<i>il</i> or <i>ce?</i>	308
3.8.2.2	<i>le</i>	308
3.8.2.3	<i>on</i>	309
3.8.2.4	<i>soi</i>	310
3.8.3	<i>en</i>	310
3.8.4	<i>y</i>	312
3.9	Usage with names of countries	312
3.9.1	<i>France</i>	313
3.9.2	<i>Europe</i>	315
3.9.3	<i>Afrique</i>	317
3.9.4	<i>Asie et Australasie</i>	318
3.9.5	<i>Moyen-Orient</i>	319
3.9.6	<i>Amérique du Nord</i>	320
3.9.7	<i>Amérique Centrale</i>	320
3.9.8	<i>Amérique du Sud</i>	321
3.9.9	Seas, Oceans and Mountains	322
3.10	Changes of word class	322

Vocabulary list: words and expressions contained in Sections 2.1 to 2.4 325

1 Register

In order to appreciate fully what is meant by the term 'register' and how vital it is in the advanced study of a foreign language, it is necessary first of all to consider it against the general background of what are known as varieties of language.

1.1 Varieties of language

Students talking among themselves would use a different type of vocabulary and even different grammatical structures from those they would use when addressing their teacher, or when being interviewed for a job, or when talking to a young child – or a dog. They would use different vocabulary and structures when writing an essay on 20th-century French literature, when talking about pop music or feminism with friends in a pub, or when visiting grandparents. A person can speak formally or informally, or can use an appropriate shade of formality. The intention can be to persuade, to encourage, to inform, to amuse. One can express oneself in writing, in conversation, in a speech. A person can speak in a professional role, for instance as a teacher, a lawyer or a doctor. It is clear that people have at their command many different ways of expressing themselves depending upon circumstances. Language is used for a variety of purposes, in a variety of situations and is expressed by a variety of means. A language should not therefore be seen as a homogeneous whole, but as a collection of varieties. There exist varieties of English; there are also varieties of French, German, Spanish, and so on.

At the same time as children acquire the grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation systems of their own language, they acquire in addition an increasing intuitive awareness of the varieties available in their language and of when to use them appropriately. However, for the foreign-language learner, acquiring the capacity to operate within an appropriate variety of language is a more conscious matter, although even here, with increasing competence, selection of the appropriate variety becomes increasingly automatic.

A variety of language is determined by a number of factors; some

are peripheral, others central in importance. In this book we are not concerned with varieties themselves, but with one of the essential factors which constitute them, register.

1.2 Peripheral factors

The way French speakers use their language is affected by such matters as their sex (a woman may have different general speech characteristics from a man), their age (for example whether they are adolescents or octogenarians), where they come from (for example a Parisian, a Marseillais and a Martiniquan will all have idiosyncrasies of speech which are due to their places of origin), and their socio-economic standing (that is to say the degree of education they have received and their social and professional status). These are factors over which the speaker has little, if any, control, as they are deeprooted ingredients of his/her individuality. They are, therefore, of secondary importance in an analysis of varieties of language.

1.3 Central factors

Of much greater immediate importance in determining the composition of varieties are the following factors: subject matter, purpose, medium and register.

1.3.1 Field

What one is talking about affects the way one expresses oneself. For example, when the French discuss politics they will draw upon a certain vocabulary which would be quite inappropriate in a discussion on zoology, although, of course, there are certain 'common core' features which are used whatever the topic under discussion. The term 'field' is used to denote the subject matter of a conversation, speech, etc. It means a collection of words and expressions relating specifically to a certain topic, for example politics, and covers the many types of situations in which politics may be discussed. It may be politics as practised by a politician, or as reported by a political correspondent in the press, or as debated over a glass of wine between friends in a bar. The field includes, therefore, not only the technical vocabulary of the professional but also the less technical vocabulary used by the non-specialist talking about the same subject.

1.3.2 Purpose

Whatever the status of the speaker – whether he/she is a politician, or the political correspondent of a daily newspaper, or simply a layperson

talking politics with a friend – language is used with a purpose. The politician will attempt to persuade; the political journalist to inform, comment and/or evaluate; the layman may simply chat, or may adopt the stance of the politician or journalist depending upon knowledge, inclination or intention.

1.3.3 Medium

The medium of communication also needs to be taken into account. By medium is meant the vehicle through which the subject matter is conveyed to a listener or an audience. In politics it may be a speech made in parliament or at the hustings, it may be a written report of a debate or a manifesto, a piece of propaganda used in an election campaign, or simply a conversation. The spontaneous expression of a conversation will contrast with the carefully prepared wording of a speech: the medium therefore places constraints on the way one expresses oneself.

1.3.4 Register

The final factor to consider in this analysis of varieties of language is register. Register is concerned with the relationship that exists between a speaker and the person he/she is speaking to. In other words it is the degree of formality or informality which a speaker accords the listener. This degree of formality/informality depends in turn upon four variable factors, in increasing order of importance: sex, age, status and intimacy. The sex of the speaker or listener, the least important of the variables, may not even be relevant in certain situations. However, sometimes it is: exclusively male or female gatherings often have their own peculiar speech habits which are a direct result of the company present; a young man talking to his girlfriend may use a different standard of language from that which he will use when he is chatting to his male friends; it may involve only a slight adjustment – does he swear in the presence of women? However, even this question is not so straightforward as it may seem – that men should consider moderating or changing their language in the company of women would be ill received by certain women. Conversely, certain young and not-so-young women now take pride in adopting as free a manner to express themselves as they feel men already have. Differences between the language used by the two sexes are tending to disappear among some groups. The age of a speaker has already been mentioned in **1.2** as having a bearing upon the way he/she speaks – elderly speakers have different speech habits from younger ones – but in this section it is the possibility of varying the way one speaks, according to the age of the person spoken to, that is relevant. Parents talking to young children will use a different, simpler, vocabulary and grammar from that which they would use when talking to colleagues or contemporaries. In the same way, a

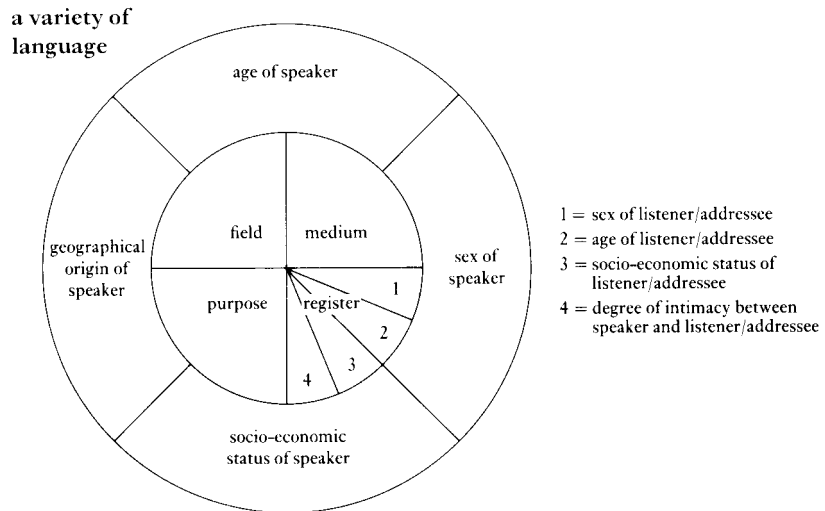
teacher will use a different level of language in classroom and common room. Status also plays an important role in determining register. When discussed in **1.2**, status was used to refer to the degree of education and the social and professional standing of the speaker. In this section it refers to the ability of a person to adjust his/her speech according to the status of the person addressed: an employee in a factory talking to a director, the director in turn talking to an employee, a shop assistant serving a customer, will use different registers because of their respective positions in the social or professional hierarchy. Finally and most important, intimacy, the degree to which speakers know and trust each other, affects the way they speak to each other. A first encounter between two persons requires a different register from that required by a conversation between a husband and wife celebrating their fourth wedding anniversary. These four factors, sex, age, status and intimacy, combine to produce register, the relationship of formality/informality existing between speakers.

The relationship between these factors, particularly those of age and status, and the peripheral factors mentioned briefly in **1.2**, needs to be considered briefly. There is, of necessity, some interaction between the two types of factor. To examine first the relationship between the age of the speaker (peripheral) and the age of the person addressed (central), it is clear that in certain cases the age of the speaker will override his/her ability to adjust to the level of the person addressed: for example, a child will not have the necessary linguistic sophistication to adjust its speech in order to address an adult in an adult way; at the other end of the age range, an elderly person may lose the expertise he/she once possessed to adjust his/her speech to become comprehensible to a child, or such a person may never have had sufficient experience of children's language to realise what adjustments should be made. Similarly for status: it is well known that, for certain people, the linguistic patterns peculiar to their class or profession are so indelibly ingrained that they are unable or would consider it demeaning to vary their speech: it is unlikely that a poorly-educated person will be in a position to produce the appropriate level of language when conversing with a person of higher social standing; conversely a person of aristocratic stock may find it extremely difficult to eliminate from his/her speech those linguistic elements which are all but innate, when addressing someone of lower social rank. There are circumstances, therefore, when a certain neutralisation of the effects of the various factors occurs.

A corollary of register concerns the character of the language actually produced, more precisely the degree of explicitness which is necessary for communication within a given situation. In particular, the more intimately one knows someone, the more similar the socio-economic status and to a lesser degree the ages involved, the more information that can be taken for granted in conversation and the less

need for formal structuring of language (**1.6.1**): there is no need to be explicit about family matters within the family or about business affairs with close colleagues, because in these cases so much is common knowledge and may be left unspecified. On the other hand, strangers meeting for the first time or students attending an induction course require detailed explanations of every aspect of this new experience or undertaking and an elaborate, grammatically correct structuring of what is said (**1.6.4** and **1.6.5**).

It is now possible to show in diagrammatic form how all these factors combine to constitute a variety of language.



1.4 Register as used in this book

According to the definition of the previous section (**1.3.4**), register involves the relationship of formality/informality existing between the two participants in a conversation or any other situation in which language is used. The most accurate way of representing register would be to envisage it as a scale extending from extreme informality at one end to extreme formality at the other, with a multitude of different shades of formality in between. However, for ease of reference and use in this book, the scale will be divided into three distinct sections, each of which will cover a third of the scale of formality. These three sections will be known as R1, R2 and R3 and their major characteristics may be summarised in the following way:

extreme
informalityextreme
formality**R1**

very informal, casual,
colloquial, familiar,
careless, admitting new
terms almost
indiscriminately, certain
terms short-lived, at times
truncated, elliptical,
incorrect grammatically,
prone to redundant
expressions, includes slang
expressions and
vulgarisms, likely to
include regional variations

R2

standard, polite, educated,
equivalent of 'BBC
English', compromise
between the two extremes

R3

formal, literary, official,
with archaic ring, language
of scholars and purists,
meticulously correct,
reluctant to admit new
terms

It must be stressed once more that these sections are the result of an artificial division and that the reality behind them consists of subtle, imperceptible shifts, not of rigidly defined categories. (We have confined these register divisions to three, as being more practicable to handle, although scholars in the field often distinguish five.)

A few comments on the above schematisation of register are called for. Because the divisions are arbitrary, some examples (2.10.1) do not fit exactly into one of the sections: in such circumstances the notation R1/R2 or R2/R3 is used. When a usage occurs in two registers the notation R1 and R2 or R2 and R3 is used. Whereas R2 and R3 appear more homogeneous as divisions of register, R1 covers a rich range of informal language, stretching, for example, from obscene interjections to unobjectionable ones (2.10.1); the notation R1* is used to encompass vulgar language (eg **foutre**, **merde**, **putain**). At times language included in R1 is in fact grammatically incorrect and frequently swings from elliptical usage to an extensive use of unnecessary repetition.

Looking towards the future, it is possible that some of what at present are deemed incorrect usages contained in R1 will become socially acceptable language. It is interesting to observe that the *tolérances* – lists of grammatical and orthographical usages previously condemned but now accepted – issued by the French government for the benefit of examiners quite frequently concern matters of register (although this is not explicitly acknowledged by the authorities). What was considered typically R1 usage, and therefore shunned by the users of 'correct' R2/R3 French, is raised by decree to at least R2 status:

eg an examiner may now accept:

c'est là de beaux résultats

as well as the traditionally only acceptable

ce sont là de beaux résultats

similarly, in the matter of sequence of tenses with the subjunctive (3.7.1),

j'avais souhaité qu'il vienne sans tarder

is now tolerated as well as

j'avais souhaité qu'il vînt sans tarder

Although the *tolérances* have official backing, they do not always find universal acceptance outside such circles:

eg **la fillette, obéissante à sa mère, alla se coucher**

j'ai recueilli cette chienne errante dans le quartier

étant données les circonstances (3.6.3.2)

Another characteristic of R1 usage which should be stressed is the fact that many items of its vocabulary are ephemeral in nature. In slang and popular speech there are noticeable preferences for certain types of words, namely those which are striking by their sound or by the manner in which they are created (usually as a result of a metaphorical extension of meaning). Such words are frequently victims of the ravages of fashion and within a relatively short period of time tend to become overworked, thus losing their impact and appeal, and need to be replaced. A rapid turnover in vocabulary is the result: words that are on everyone's lips one year, or even for part of a year, seem terribly dated the following year, and using an out-of-date term may well mark a speaker as being 'past it' or at least old-fashioned. (For this reason a number of the terms included in 2.10.1 will have a limited life-span.)

The phenomenon of register switch should also be illustrated. It is likely that uneducated speakers will use only R1 whatever social situation they find themselves in, whereas an educated speaker will be able to command all three with equal ease, passing from one end of the scale to the other without great difficulty. To go further than was possible in section 1.3.4 and to give a specific example drawn from higher education, a formal lecture would normally be delivered in R3, whereas a seminar would normally be conducted in R2, and, depending upon the degree of friendliness existing between lecturer and student, it is conceivable that a one-to-one tutorial might be carried on in R1: linguistic distinctions based upon differences of sex, age and status disappear with deepening intimacy. It is not, of course, only lecturers who have the ability to switch register! A native speaker's ability to adjust his/her register in various circumstances is the key to avoiding offence and to gaining acceptance in any given situation. The degree to which a foreign learner can achieve that ability to adjust his/her register is a mark of competence in, and mastery of, the foreign language.

1.5 Illustration of register

Register affects all aspects of language: pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. Although vocabulary and grammar are the major

preoccupations of this book, it is worthwhile considering briefly some of the effects of register upon the pronunciation of French.

1.5.1 Pronunciation and liaison

The making of valid general comments upon the issues raised by pronunciation is fraught with risks. Pronunciation is the least stable, most variable aspect of a person's speech habits, and it is well known that a single individual will not necessarily always pronounce the same word in the same way. Consequently the observations that follow must be appreciated in the light of such a reservation. Another problem is that certain tendencies of pronunciation are restricted to a particular region; in such cases disentangling accent from register is very difficult.

On the whole, as might be expected, an R1 speaker tends to be less careful about pronunciation than an R2 and particularly an R3 speaker. In what follows, R1 usage is contrasted with R2 and R3 usages, and regionalisms will be kept as far as possible to a minimum.

The most obvious general characteristic of R1 pronunciation is a relative laziness of articulation, resulting in, amongst other things, the loss of certain sounds or the introduction or change of others. This is illustrated in the following ways. It should be noted that it is not always a matter of, for example, the clear-cut presence or absence of /r/ (ie /kat/ versus /katr/), but of a gradual movement from precise articulation to more indistinct articulation of the sound.

Register marked in treatment of	R1 and example	R2+R3	written form	
consonants:				
reduction of groups of consonants	/gʒ/ → /ʒ/ /ks/ → /s/	/syʒɛsjɔ̃/ /ɛskyz/ /ɛspedisjɔ̃/ /ɛsplwa/	/syʒɛstjɔ̃/ /ɛkskyz/ /ɛkspedisjɔ̃/ /ɛksplwa/	<i>suggestion</i> <i>excuse</i> <i>expédition</i> <i>exploit</i>
	/lk/ → /k/ /st/ → /s/ /tr/ → /t/	/kɛkʃoz/ /ʒɛsjɔ̃/ /ptɛt/	/kɛlkəʃoz/ /ʒɛstjɔ̃/ /pɔtɛtr/	<i>quelque chose</i> <i>gestion</i> <i>peut-être</i>
dropping of consonants	/l/	/i fɛ bo/ /i vjɛ/	/il fɛ bo/ /il vjɛ/	<i>il fait beau</i> <i>il vient</i>
	/r/ /t/ (all numbers from 22 to 29)	/rəgade/ /vɛ̃dø/ to /vɛ̃nœf/	/rəgarde/ /vɛ̃tdø/ to /vɛ̃tnœf/	<i>regarder</i> <i>vingt-deux to</i> <i>vingt-neuf</i>
change of consonant	/s/ → /z/	/ätuzjazm/ /idealizm/ /sɔsjalizm/	/ätuzjazm/ /idealizm/ /sɔsjalizm/	<i>enthousiasme</i> <i>idéalisme</i> <i>socialisme</i>

Register marked in treatment of	R1 and example	R2+R3	written form	
vowels: confusion of <i>e</i> -sounds	/ə/ → /e/	/rekɔ̃stitɥe/ /reose/	/rəkɔ̃stitɥe/ /rəose/	<i>reconstituer</i> <i>rehausser</i>
	/e/ → /ə/	/rəbeljɔ̃/	/rebəljɔ̃/	<i>rébellion</i>
	/e/ → /ɛ/	/ʒ pø vu lasyrɛ/	/ʒə pø vu lasyrɛ/	<i>je peux vous</i> <i>l'assurer</i>
		/dəgrɛ/ (Parisian)	/dəgrɛ/	<i>degré</i>
treatment of mute <i>e</i>	/ɛ/ → /e/	/me/ /frāse/ /rezɔ̃/	/mɛ/ /frāse/ /rezɔ̃/	<i>mais</i> <i>français</i> <i>raison</i>
	pronounced	/apəle/	/aple/	<i>appeler</i>
	where	/āseɲmə/	/āseɲmə/	<i>enseignement</i>
	normally	/evɛnəmā/	/evenmə/	<i>événement</i>
	silent	/mɛtənā/	/mɛtnā/	<i>maintenant</i>
	silent where	/fra/	/fəra/	<i>fera</i>
	normally pronounced	/frɔ̃/ /fzɛ/	/fəɔ̃/ /fəzɛ/	<i>feront</i> <i>faisait</i>
lengthening of /a/ confusion of <i>o</i> -sounds	introduction of /ə/	/ark də trijɔ̃f/ /avɛkə/ /lɔ̃rsəkə/	/ark də trijɔ̃f/ /avɛk/ /lɔ̃rskə/	<i>Arc de</i> <i>Triomphe</i> <i>avec</i> <i>lorsque</i>
	/a/ → /aː/	/gɑːto/	/gato/	<i>gâteau</i>
	/o/ → /ɔ/	/ɔt/	/otr/	<i>autre</i>
		/o ʃɔd/ } /sɔtɛ/ } /vɔʒ / }	South- ern /o ʃod/ /sɔtɛ/ /voʒ/	<i>eau chaude</i> <i>sauter</i> <i>Vosges</i>

Liaison – the phenomenon which, in closely linked groups of words, causes the normally silent final consonant of a word to be sounded before the initial vowel of the next word – may also be affected by considerations of register. However, first of all it should be stressed that in certain circumstances liaison is compulsorily applied and in others it is prohibited; in other words all speakers, regardless of their normal register of speech, are obliged to observe these rules of liaison, as briefly illustrated in the following table:

	circumstance	examples
liaison compulsory	between qualifier + noun	<i>ses amis</i> /sez ami/ <i>deux ans</i> /døz ā/ <i>de grands arbres</i> /də grāz arbr/
		NOTE: an adjective ending in a nasal vowel is denasalised in liaison and is

	circumstance	examples
liaison compulsory (<i>cont.</i>)		pronounced like the corresponding F form: <i>le prochain arrêt</i> : /lə prɔʃɛn arɛ/
	between pronoun + verb/ verb + pronoun	<i>elles ont</i> /ɛlz ɔ̃/ <i>nous avons</i> /nuz avɔ̃/ <i>allez-y</i> /alez i/
	between monosyllabic adverb or preposition + article, noun, pronoun adjective or adverb	<i>sous une chaise</i> /suz yn ʃɛz/ <i>moins utile</i> /mwāz ytil/ <i>plus important</i> /plyz ɛ pɔrtā/
	after the conjunction (not interrogative) <i>quand</i>	<i>quand il vient</i> /kāt il vjɛ̃/
	after the following words ending in a nasal vowel: <i>en, on, un, mon, ton, son, bien, rien</i>	NOTE: partial denasalisation occurs with <i>en, on, un, mon, ton, son</i> , the degree of denasalisation depending upon a variety of factors (eg register, place of origin): <i>mon ami</i> /mɔ̃n ami/ or /mɔn ami/ This does not apply to <i>bien</i> and <i>rien</i> : <i>bien indisposé</i> is always /bjɛ̃ n ɛ dispose/.
liaison prohibited	before numeral beginning with a vowel	<i>les onze</i> /le ɔ̃z/ <i>cent un crayons</i> /sā œ krejɔ̃/
	after <i>et</i>	<i>et alors</i> /e alɔr/
	before <i>oui</i>	<i>mais oui</i> /mɛ wi/
	between singular subject + verb	<i>le soldat est parti</i> /lə sɔlda ɛ parti/
	after words ending in a nasal vowel not specified above	<i>selon eux</i> /səlɔ̃ ø/ <i>bon à rien</i> /bɔ̃ a rjɛ̃/ NOTE: however, when <i>bon à rien</i> is a noun, liaison occurs
	before words with aspirate <i>h</i>	<i>un héros</i> /œ̃ero/ <i>le hibou</i> /lə ibu/ NOTE: R1 speakers tend to disregard the aspirate <i>h</i> in: <i>les handicapés</i> <i>les haricots</i> <i>les Hollandais</i>

There are on the other hand, circumstances where liaison is optional. Practice may be summed up in the following simple formula: the more formal the language, the more liaisons are made; the more informal, the fewer liaisons. The dividing line may normally be situated within R2: a slightly higher register is struck when liaison is made. Use of liaison is often accompanied by an element of emphasis.

	circumstances	examples	R1 + R2	R2 + R3
liaison optional	between plural noun + verb, adjective or adverb	<i>des mots impossibles à comprendre</i> <i>les trains arrivent</i>	/mo ɛ̃pɔsibl/ /trɛ ariv/	/moz ɛ̃pɔsibl/ /trɛz ariv/
	between verb + past participle, infinitive, adjective, adverb or prepositional expression	<i>je suis en retard</i> <i>je suis heureux</i> <i>je suis assez content</i>	/sɥi ɑ̃ rɛtar/ /sɥi œrø/ /sɥi ase kɔ̃tɑ̃/	/sɥiz ɑ̃ rɛtar/ sɥiz œrø/ /sɥiz ase kɔ̃tɑ̃/
	after polysyllabic adverbs and prepositions and monosyllabic conjunctions (except <i>et</i> and <i>quand</i>)	<i>extrêmement assidu</i> <i>pendant une semaine</i> <i>mais il riait</i>	/ɛkstrɛmɑ̃ asidy/ /pɑ̃dɑ̃ yn sɑmɛn/ /mɛ il rjɛ/	/ɛkstrɛmɑ̃ asidy/ /pɑ̃dɑ̃t yn sɑmɛn/ /mɛz il rjɛ/

1.5.2 Vocabulary and grammar

As already stated, it is with vocabulary and grammar that this book is primarily concerned. The following tables give a preliminary picture of the repercussions of considerations of register upon French vocabulary and grammar.

In the interpretation of the tables it is important to draw a distinction between those concerning vocabulary and those concerning grammar. In the former, terms that are designated R2 are not necessarily confined exclusively to R2 usage and may also occur in R1 and R3 usages, without disconcerting an addressee. On the other hand, R1 and R3 terms are normally (that is, with the reservations mentioned earlier) restricted to the relevant register. For example, *boue*, recorded in the table as R2, is a neutral term as far as register is concerned, and may be used not only in R2 but also in R1 and R3 usages, whereas *gadoue*, recorded as R1, immediately evokes an R1 context and *fangue*, recorded as R3, evokes an R3 context, both

terms being rarely used outside those register-divisions. In other words, an R1 speaker may choose between a distinctive R1 term, *gadoue*, and a neutral, 'common core' term *boue*; similarly an R3 user may opt for a term redolent of R3 usage, *fange*, or the neutral term *boue*.

It will be noticed that there are not in all cases terms for each of the three register-divisions: no vocabulary of any language is characterised by perfect regularity. The occasional gaps in the tables, therefore, under R1 and R3 (eg *bruit* and *faire (du) mal à/vexer*) may be accounted for by the fact that there is no distinctive R1 and R3 term in those cases, and that the term recorded as R2 should be understood as being appropriate there as well.

However, the same flexibility is not applicable in the case of the tables concerning grammar. In some cases, there are three distinct forms (eg R1: *fermez la porte*; R2: *(vous) fermez la porte, s'il vous plaît*; R3: *je vous prie de fermer la porte*). In such cases the R2 form is characteristic of the middle register-division, as opposed to the two outer divisions, and R1 and R3 speakers would not have recourse to it, except as a deliberate attempt to improve, in the case of an R1 speaker, or downgrade, in the case of an R3 speaker, their normal speech habits. On the other hand it sometimes happens that a particular form is perfectly appropriate for two or even all three divisions. This is indicated by arrows across the columns in the tables. Thus *au début de janvier* may occur quite normally in both R2 and R3 usages, and no particular effect would be produced; if it were used in R1 speech it would immediately imply a desire on the part of the speaker to converse in a higher register.

There are also gaps in the grammar tables. These should be interpreted as implying that in such cases there is no closely corresponding version available or that in that particular register-division speakers are unlikely to express that idea at all.

There is, of course, nothing exclusive about these divisions. R3 speakers are perfectly at liberty to use an R1 form in their speech; the effect will be arresting, probably humorous, evoking momentarily a situation which is quite foreign to the speakers. Similarly if R1 speakers suddenly use an isolated R3 form, the result is that their speech will briefly acquire a pedantic tone.

All the foregoing remarks hold good for the two major parts of the book. In **Part 2: Vocabulary**, sections **2.1** to **2.5**, R2 terms may generally be used in R1 and R3 usages as well; in later sections concerning the vocabulary, restricting comments are sometimes made. In **Part 3: Grammar**, the tables and comments specify how usages are to be applied.

**Register
marked in
treatment of
vocabulary**

R1	R2	R3
	accorder/donner/ remettre	conférer décerner
donner un coup de main	aider	assister/seconder
sympa	aimable/gentil/ plaisant/sympathique	affable/amène
crevant/marrant/ rigolo/tordant	amusant/drôle	cocasse
gadoue	boue	fange
j'en ai marre/ j'en ai ras-le-bol j'en ai ralbol	j'en ai assez	j'en suis saturé
	bâtir/construire	édifier/ériger
boucan/chahut	bruit	
d'acc/OK	d'accord	entendu/soit
	dire au revoir/ saluer	faire ses adieux/ prendre congé
énervé/emmerder R1 */ enquiquiner	ennuyer	importuner
	enterrement	obsèques
	faire (du) mal à/ vexer	blesser/offusquer
bonne femme	femme = <i>lady</i> femme = <i>wife</i>	dame épouse
gueule/trogne/bouille/ binette/tronche	figure/visage	face
filles/nana/souris	jeune fille	demoiselle
gars	garçon/jeune homme	
	honnête	intègre/probe
	il y a des romanciers qui	il est des romanciers qui
	jeter	
balancer/bazarder/ flanquer/foutre en l'air		
dégueulasse/crado	malpropre/sale	ordurier
louper/rater	manquer	
homme (<i>as in</i> : mon homme)	mari	époux

**Register
marked in
treatment of
vocabulary**

R1	R2	R3
bon homme/mec/type se foutre de R1 */ mettre en boîte	monsieur/homme se moquer de	se gausser de
	mort obscurité pour raconter/rapporter remplir	décès/trépas ténèbres afin de narrer/relater emplir
réaliser paie je me rappelle de	se rendre compte de salaire/traitement je me souviens de/ je me rappelle	prendre conscience de rémunération j'ai souvenance de/ il me souvient de
se casser la figure	tomber	

**Register
marked in
treatment of
grammar**

R1	R2	R3
ellipsis malade, lui? impossible	il n'est pas malade, ce n'est pas possible il est impossible/ n'est pas possible qu'il soit malade ←————— →	
(à la) fin mai (au) début janvier	←————— à la fin (du mois) de mai —————→ ←————— au début de janvier —————→	
redundancy of expression comme par exemple mais ils ont cependant et puis après descendre en bas monter en haut prévoir à l'avance entrer dedans sortir dehors	←————— par exemple —————→ ←————— mais/cependant ils ont —————→ ←————— et puis/et après —————→ ←————— descendre —————→ ←————— monter —————→ ←————— prévoir —————→ ←————— entrer —————→ ←————— sortir —————→	

Register marked in treatment of grammar	R1	R2	R3
imperative	fermez la porte	(vous) fermez la porte, s'il vous plaît	je vous prie de fermer la porte
	fermez pas la porte	ne fermez pas la porte, s'il vous plaît	je vous prie de ne pas fermer la porte
exclamation	ça alors, il est déjà là	quelle surprise, il est déjà là	cela m'étonne/ surprend qu'il soit déjà là/je m'étonne qu'il soit déjà là
	ce qu'il a grandi/ qu'est-ce qu'il a grandi	← comme/qu'il a grandi →	
highlighting	l'objectif, c'est de	← l'objectif est de →	
	le whisky, ça j'aime pas	← je n'aime pas le whisky →	
	je la casse, la vitre	← je casse la vitre →	
inversion	← il est à peine arrivé →	← à peine est-il arrivé →	
	← elle est du moins la meilleure de la classe →	← du moins est-elle la meilleure de la classe →	
	← on peut dire tout au plus →	← tout au plus peut-on dire →	
	← j'ai vu une voiture qu'un vieillard conduisait →	← j'ai vu une voiture que conduisait un vieillard →	
	← après qu'il soit venu →	← après qu'il est venu →	
	← le seul/dernier/premier homme que je connais →	← le seul/dernier/premier homme que je connaisse →	
	aucun pays ne permet ça c'est pas vrai qu'elle est arrivée	il n'y a aucun pays qui permet cela il n'est pas vrai qu'elle est arrivée	il n'y a aucun pays qui permette cela il n'est pas exact qu'elle soit arrivée
tense of subjunctive		le fait qu'il soit (= was) le premier à partir	(le fait) qu'il fût le premier à partir

**Register
marked in
treatment of
grammar**
past tenses
R1

c'était qui le
premier ministre?
Louis XIV, il était
roi de France
quand?

R2

qui était le
premier ministre?
quand est-ce que
Louis XIV a été
roi de France?

R3

qui fut le
premier ministre?
quand Louis XIV
fut-il roi de
France?

**agreement
with *c'est***

c'est eux
c'est les
meilleures
voitures

←————— ce sont eux —————→
←————— ce sont les meilleures —————→
voitures

interrogatives

vous dites quoi?

qu'est-ce que vous
dites?

hein?/quoi?

←————— que dites-vous? —————→

elle vient?

comment?/pardon?

plaît-il?

vous venez d'où/
d'où vous venez?

est-ce qu'elle vient?

vient-elle?

pourquoi (qu')il
vient?

d'où est-ce que
vous venez?

d'où êtes-vous
originaire?

pourquoi est-ce
qu'il vient?

←————— pourquoi vient-il? —————→

elle vient quand?

quand est-ce qu'elle
vient?

←————— quand vient-elle? —————→

il le fait comment?

comment est-ce
qu'il le fait?

←————— comment le fait-il? —————→

c'était qui le
premier ministre?

qui était le
premier ministre?

qui fut le
premier ministre?

**que versus
inversion**

peut-être qu'il
viendra

←————— il viendra peut-être —————→

sans doute qu'elle a
raison

←————— peut-être viendra-t-il —————→

←————— elle a sans doute raison —————→

sans doute a-t-elle
raison

Register marked in treatment of grammar	R1	R2	R3
pronouns	ça	← cela (celui-ci/celui-là) →	
	on est content, les gens nous aident	on est content d'être aidé par les gens	nous sommes heureux que les gens nous viennent en aide
	c'est difficile de je vois la maison – c'est grand	← il est difficile de → ← je vois la maison – elle est grande →	
pronouns and possessive adjectives with parts of the body	une pierre est tombée sur ma tête	← une pierre m'est tombée sur la tête →	
prepositions	le chapeau à Marc il va en vélo ← dans l'église →	← le chapeau de Marc → ← il va à vélo/bicyclette →	en l'église
negation	j'ose pas le faire (je) sais pas (moi)/j'en sais rien ça vaut pas le coup de le faire/ c'est pas la peine (de le faire)	je n'ose pas le faire il n'a pas cessé de pleuvoir je ne sais pas ce n'est pas la peine de le faire ← il n'est pas nécessaire de le faire →	je n'ose le faire il n'a cessé de pleuvoir je ne sais
partitive article with adjective before plural noun	← je vois des grands arbres, des grosses carottes →	← je vois de grands arbres, de grosses carottes →	
infinitive versus que-clause	← demande à ton père de venir → ← dis à ta sœur de venir →		demandez au ministre qu'il vienne dites au ministre qu'il vienne
euphony	← si on constate que →		si l'on constate que

As has already been implied in the preceding tables, R1 speech is occasionally (sometimes frequently) characterised by a certain grammatical or lexical carelessness, which may in fact involve significant departure from the grammatical rules accepted in R2 and R3 usage. The following table illustrates a few of the most widespread examples; the standard forms in R2 and R3 are also given.

R1 characterised by grammatical carelessness	R2 + R3
je m'en rappelle	je me le rappelle
du point de vue littérature	du point de vue littéraire
un espèce de fou	une espèce de fou
neuf francs chaque	neuf francs chacun
se fâcher après	se fâcher contre
aller au dentiste/docteur	aller chez le dentiste/docteur
nous avons convenu de (= <i>we agreed to</i>)	nous sommes convenus de NOTE: <i>this is being replaced by nous avons convenu de</i>
ce n'est pas de sa faute	ce n'est pas sa faute
il fait pareil que vous	il fait comme vous
partir à Lyon/en Italie/à la campagne	partir pour Lyon/l'Italie/la campagne NOTE: <i>the distinction between à/en and pour is blurred here. Many R2 speakers would readily use à/en.</i>
ce que j'ai besoin, c'est . . .	ce dont j'ai besoin, c'est . . .
ce que j'ai peur, c'est . . .	ce dont j'ai peur, c'est . . .
lire sur le journal	lire dans le journal
la lettre dans laquelle je vous annonce	la lettre par laquelle je vous annonce
une avion	un avion
une élastique	un élastique
un autoroute	une autoroute
la mode d'emploi	le mode d'emploi
revenant de voyage, notre père est venu nous chercher à la gare	notre père est venu nous chercher à la gare à notre retour

**R1 characterised by
lexical carelessness**

R2 + R3

on oppose son véto	on met son véto
cette nouvelle s'est avérée fausse messieursdames	cette nouvelle s'est révélée fausse mesdames et messieurs
il risque de gagner de l'argent plein les poches	il a des chances de gagner les poches pleines d'argent
j'ai très faim	R3: j'ai grand-faim

NOTE: *although très is frowned upon by purists, it is widely used in such circumstances in R2 speech*

In the body of this book unless it is specifically stated otherwise, the word or expression or grammatical construction under discussion will belong to R2.

1.6 Passages illustrating levels of register

NOTE: *From passage 1.6.1 to 1.6.5 there is a gradual movement from R1 to R3.*

1.6.1 A la sortie du cinéma

- Martine: Ah, c'était trop bien.
 Julien: Ah bon?
 Martine: Je vois pas ce que t'as trouvé de si dément dans ce film. Ben, j'sais pas c'qu'i te font, les cascades et tout . . . Géant. Il est trop balèze, le mec.
 Julien: OK, il est p'tet balèze, mais c'est du déjà-vu. Moi, j'en ai ras-le-bol de ce genre de film.
 Martine: J'suis pas du tout d'accord.
 Julien: Oh allez, l'aventure, les cascades, les nanas . . . c'est bien mignon tout ça, mais moi, ça m'emballe pas des masses.
 Martine: Pourquoi tu vas au ciné, toi?
 Julien: Chais pas. En tout cas, c'est pas mon genre de film. Je m'attendais à aut'chose un petit peu, euh, quequ'chose d'un petit peu plus sérieux, mais enfin, oh, c'est Belmondo. J'aurais dû m'y attendre.
 Martine: Oh, pourtant, c'est aut'chose à côté de Delon.
 Julien: Belmondo, Belmondo, vous ne jurez que par lui.
 Martine: Et à raison.
 Julien: Ouais ben, c'est un peu limite, je trouve.
 Martine: Ben, moi, j'ai trouvé ça vraiment super.
 Julien: OK pour les cascades et les poursuites en bagnoles!
 Martine: Ouais, et puis le paysage, c'est génial le Mexique. Et la musique.
 Julien: Ben, à ce moment-là, t'as qu'à aller voir un documentaire.

1 Register

- Martine: Ça va pas, non? Un documentaire! T'es ouf!
 Julien: Au point de vue docu, j'trouve ça pas terrible.
 Martine: Bon ben, moi, j'ai aimé – alors la ferme!
 Julien: Enfin, j'aurais mieux fait d'dépenser mes quarante balles dans un café.
 Martine: C'est clair que c'est plutôt ça ton truc.

Vocabulary	trop = very (marks emphasis) dément = fantastic géant = great balèze = brill le mec = guy, bloke j'en ai ras-le-bol = I'm fed up with it les nanas = birds emballer = to send des masses = a lot, much le ciné = pictures chais pas = <i>je ne sais pas</i> limite = limited super = great la bagnole = car génial = fantastic un docu = documentary ouf = mad (verlan for <i>fou</i>) la ferme = belt up une balle = new franc (in this passage, also = <i>centime</i> for older people) clair = certain ton truc = what you like
Form of address	t'(u)
Verbs	restricted range of tenses only present, perfect, 1 conditional perfect; complete absence of subjunctive mood
Elision/ellipsis	t'as trouvé aut' chose j'sais pas quequ' c'qu' t'es ouf p'têt au point de vue docu j'suis j'trouve chais pas la ferme! (= belt up!)
Highlighting	il est trop balèze, le mec moi, j'en ai ras-le-bol moi, ça m'emballe pas moi, j'ai trouvé ça vraiment super