

# Kernerman English-French Learner's Dictionary: Adapting the translation from European French to Canadian/Québec French

Suzanne DesGroseilliers

## Introduction

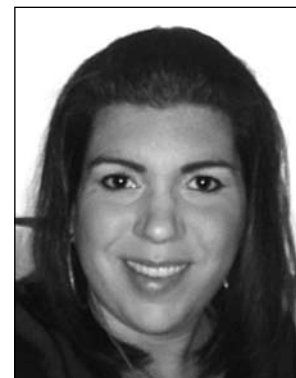
This article describes the process behind the adaptation of an English-French dictionary for a French-speaking audience in Québec. The varieties of French spoken in Canada, and in Québec in particular, have evolved differently than in Europe, where the community of French speakers is much larger. As French is one of the official languages in Canada, and is the official language in Québec, one would assume there are many dictionaries suited to speakers of French in both places. However, the situation in practice is somewhat different. The vast majority of dictionaries used in schools, universities, or businesses are those edited and compiled in France: mainly, *Le Robert*, for French only, and the *Robert-Collins* or *Harraps* for bilingual use. Some exceptions come to mind: *Le Multidictionnaire de la langue française*, *le Dictionnaire Franqus*, *Le dictionnaire québécois d'aujourd'hui*, *Termium*, etc. But these types of dictionaries are mainly intended to explain the specificities of the French language spoken in Québec and few are bilingual. Others are databases offering only equivalents, without examples of usage, and are thus not useful enough for learners. The translated content of the bilingual dictionaries produced in Europe is certainly understood by French speakers in Québec, who are regularly exposed to French culture outside of Québec. Although the French language in Québec is different in its verbal form, in its written form it tends to follow the rules originating from France. That being said, when compiling a dictionary there is no justification not to take into consideration the differences between two communities that speak the same language when compiling a dictionary. Every language has its own peculiarities, making each language distinctive, unique, and special to those who speak it, and is the reflection of the community in which it takes place. It is then clear that some work had to be done: a proper French adaptation of a bilingual dictionary for Québec should be undertaken in order to offer to locals a dictionary they can rely on and in which they can recognize their own variety of French. Mainly, the task was to add French

equivalents (from Québec) to an English/French dictionary that had already been translated by lexicographers from France. The resulting dictionary would then be the reflection of the French spoken by native speakers in Québec.

I adapted the dictionary in Montréal, Canada, in the summer of 2011 as part of my internship as a third year translation student at the University of Montréal. The purpose of this article is to explain in detail the process of this adaptation and to give more information about the general and the specialized references that I used to do so. After analyzing the main modifications noted in the process, I was able to identify categories of the main differences found between the France version and the Québec version. This not only shows that differences do exist in French between France and Québec, but also the importance of adapting a dictionary to a specific target audience.

## Working method

As mentioned above, the main task was to add Québec equivalents to an English/French dictionary in which the initial English nomenclature had already been translated by lexicographers in France.



**Suzanne DesGroseilliers**

obtained a bachelor degree in Psychology in 2006 and a bachelor degree in Translation in 2011. During her translation studies, she worked as a student researcher in terminology at the Observatoire de linguistique Sens-Texte (OLST) at Université de Montréal. She currently works as a translator at SDL International in Montréal.  
sdesgroseilliers@sdl.com

## FRANCE VERSION

**ice-cream** [ais'kri:m] *n* 1 a sweet, frozen food made from cream and sugar

{fr} - crème glacée *f*

◇ chocolate/vanilla/strawberry ice cream

{fr} - de la crème glacée à la vanille/fraise/ au chocolat

2 *Brit* a serving of ice cream

{fr} - crème glacée *f*

◇ Can I have an ice cream?

{fr} - Je peux avoir une crème glacée ?

## QUÉBEC VERSION

**ice-cream** [ais'kri:m] *n* 1 a sweet, frozen food made from cream and sugar

{fr} - glace *f*

◇ chocolate/vanilla/strawberry ice cream

{fr} - de la glace à la vanille/fraise/ au chocolat

2 *Brit* a serving of ice cream

{fr} - glace *f*

◇ Can I have an ice cream?

{fr} - Je peux avoir une glace ?

**Figure 1:** Example of the translation of *ice-cream* in the France and Québec versions.



Figure 2: Example of the term *crème glacée* in *Antidote*.

The example of the lexical unit ‘ice cream’ is shown in Figure 1. After analyzing the different parts of the entry (definition, equivalents, examples, etc), it was clear that the France equivalent was not properly suited for a Québec audience. Indeed, the lexical unit « glace » in Québec means ‘ice’ and since this term is strongly related to the Québec reality (winter season), it is unlikely that native French speakers in Québec would relate the term « glace » to another term than ‘ice’. The decision to change « glace » for « crème glacée » was then taken. Moreover, the term « crème glacée » was validated both by the equivalent found in the reference documents and by other native speakers.

#### Reference documents

The general references that were used for the adaptation were the *Harrap’s Shorter*, mainly to validate the equivalents, *Le Grand Robert de la langue française* (online version), to add the International Phonetic Alphabet, and *Le Petit Robert*, to validate the French definitions already in place. *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* was used to validate the English definitions. As for European users, these types of reference documents are the ones that are usually used by French speakers in Québec.

I began by compiling a list of specialized references in order to properly adapt and validate the modifications made to the dictionary. This list had to be complete, the references well known in the terminology and lexicography fields, and most importantly, they had to be properly adapted to the local audience. The software *Antidote* was used, since it was created in Québec and is well known in the academic community. This application brings together a French grammar checker, 12 different dictionaries (synonyms, antonyms, co-occurrences,

idioms, etc), 11 linguistic guides (grammar, conjugation, definitions, anagrams, family, etc.) and many other linguistic revision tools. It considers the Québec reality and the specific usages of French language in this culture. It also compares the different lexical units used in Québec against those in France. A mention of *Québec* or *France* is shown in the majority of entries, telling the user if the word is adapted to either community. This software is not only useful to French speakers in Québec but also to learners, since the differences between France and Québec are well exposed. Figure 2 is a screenshot of *Antidote* referring to the same example presented in Figure 1. It validates the final decision to replace « glace » by « crème glacée ».

The *Dictionnaire Franqus*<sup>1</sup> was used to evaluate the French equivalents. This dictionary is the first French general dictionary to be completely compiled outside of France. It is also the first dictionary to be elaborated strictly based on a Québec linguistic corpus. This dictionary was useful but since it is still being developed, the results were not always conclusive. The wordlist is still limited and more specific or technical terms are not included. The *DicoInfo* (L’Homme 2011) is a specialized dictionary listing and explaining the myriad connections of terms from various domains of computer science as well as Internet usage. Since this resource is compiled in Québec, and is available online, it was used to validate the equivalents of the field of computing. Also available online, *Le Grand dictionnaire terminologique* is a terminological data bank gathering terms and their English equivalents from specialized fields. Mainly used to validate French equivalents, *Termium* is another online terminological and linguistic data bank. It was elaborated by the Translation Bureau, which is the

federal government's centre of expertise in translation and linguistic services and one of the world's leading translation organizations, and gathers almost 4 million English and French terms. I used both to confirm French equivalents. Finally, I chose two printed dictionaries to validate either the equivalents already in place or the new ones. The first, *Dictionnaire québécois d'aujourd'hui*, is based on *Le Robert d'aujourd'hui* and tends to reflect the usage of French in Québec. Secondly, *Le Multidictionnaire de la langue française* was often consulted. This dictionary was compiled by Marie-Éva de Villers and is based on the enquiries to the *Office québécois de la langue française*. It takes into consideration the present use of language in Québec and is a complete guide adapted to the particular case of French in Québec. Finally, besides the consultation of these dictionaries and data banks, I applied my own knowledge of Québec French, and often referred my questions also to other local native speakers to validate the use of certain terms.

## Results

During the process of adapting the dictionary to a Québec public, which implies the revision of the entries and the French proposed equivalents, I noted all the modifications between the two French wordlists that I had made. These notes were then divided into two categories: differences and errors. The compilation of the main differences strengthened the importance of having a bilingual dictionary that is well-adapted to a specific public, providing a better idea of the differences between two groups of native speakers from different countries.

## Main differences

After reviewing all the main differences, I divided them into seven categories: Spelling, Anglicism, Usage, Unknown, Intercultural, Idiomaticity and No equivalent. Each of these categories is explained below and an example is provided.

First, some differences were noted as **Spelling** differences. This implies that the spelling of a certain term in Québec is different, or that the France spelling is not usual in Québec. Figure 3 shows an example.

<p><b>light</b><sup>2</sup> [lait] <i>adj</i>  <b>6</b> (lite) containing less fat or sugar than usual {fr} - allégé/-ée      ◇ <i>light yogurt</i> {fr} - <i>yoghourt allégé</i></p>
---

Figure 3: Example of the entry *light*.

In this entry, the spelling of the French equivalent *yoghourt* is not usual in Québec. In another entry ('fat free'), the same French equivalent is spelled *yaourt*. Although the two forms of spelling are known in Québec, they are certainly not usual. The spelling is the first form presented in the *Multidictionnaire de la langue française* and this form of spelling was also confirmed in *Antidote*. Furthermore, the pronunciation of the words is different in France and in Québec. Most of the time, native speakers in Québec do not pronounce the final "t" while this is not the case in the French-speaking communities in Europe. I thus modified this equivalent to adapt the spelling of the word *yoghourt* to the French speakers in Québec and consequently, I changed the IPA to reflect the pronunciation.

The second category concerns differences between words that I define as **Anglicism**. The terms in this category are those considered to be Anglicism in French-speaking communities, particularly in Québec. There seems to be a general tendency in France to use Anglicism in the common language. French speakers in Québec are widely exposed to English (from Canada and the United States) and, like French speakers in France, tend to use English terms in all kinds of situations. Furthermore, as a result of being exposed to English grammar, French speakers in Québec tend to make grammatical errors in French. For example, the use of the verb « identifier », which is a proper French word, is most of the time incorrect. The correct use of the term is influenced by its English equivalent (*identify*). Dictionaries and other reference books then tend to promote a proper usage of French terms and to banish from the vernacular all forms of Anglicism. I changed all Anglicisms found in the France wordlist to proper French terms that are actually used in Québec. For example, *email* was changed to *courriel* (which is a neologism proposed by the Office québécois de la langue française) and *weekend* to the French equivalent *fin de semaine*.

Some differences can be referred to the question of **Usage**. Usually, the term is well understood by the French speaker in Québec, but it is not usual. I validated such terms with the 'frequency rate' (called *indice de fréquence*) proposed in *Antidote*. For each word, the rate of usage frequency is indicated on a scale of 100. For example, the entry 'oatmeal' initially had the French equivalent *porridge*. However, based on my native knowledge of French, and as a professional translator, I considered this was most certainly not a word largely used in Québec. In *Antidote*, the frequency rate

for *porridge* is 24, whereas that for *gruau* is 30, so I used the latter. Other examples of terms that I decided to change based on the *Antidote* frequency rate, on results found in the reference tools (*Multidictionnaire*, *OQLF*, *Colpron*, etc), and on my own knowledge of French, include: canular (40) / blague (46), troquet (30) / brasserie (44), mesure (35) / cabane (46), myrtille (34) / bleuets (39) and trouillard (27) / peureux (37).<sup>2</sup>

For certain entries, the equivalent proposed was not known in Québec. I gathered these few examples in the category **Unknown**. In the entry ‘bribe,’ the equivalent was « bakchich ». Since I did not know this word I did some research and found that it is not used in Québec. Furthermore, I validated this with other local native French speakers and no one knew what this word meant. I therefore decided to change the proposed equivalent to a more commonly-used word in Québec, which is « pourboire ».

The next category is **Intercultural**, which is closely related to that of **Usage**.

I gathered here the terms that represent a different reality in both societies or that often have a different meaning. Examples of such terms are those used in the domain of education and in the proper terminology related to the different meals in a day. In the field of education, the terminology usually used in France and in Québec varies largely. For example, in France the terms « jardin d’enfant » and « lycée » are used as opposed to « maternelle » and « secondaire » in Québec. Those differences could be categorized both in usage or intercultural. However, if we take the example of « baccalauréat » we see that the term is used both in France and in Québec, but the meaning is different in each community. In France it refers to the diploma required to pursue superior studies (received at the end of the secondary studies), whereas in Québec it refers to the diploma received at the end of the first cycle in university (bachelor’s degree). Those usages have to be taken into consideration in the adapted nomenclature of the bilingual dictionary. Another example refers to the different meals. Table 1 illustrates the main differences.

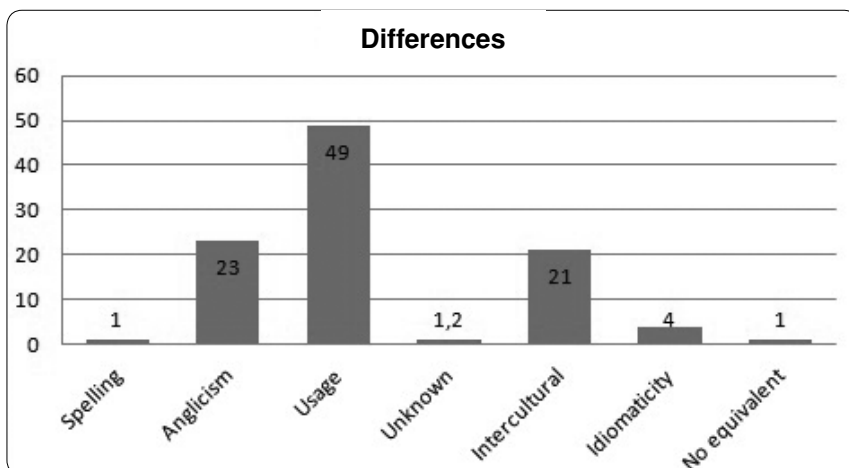
As seen here, the same term, « déjeuner », refers to two different meals: in France it is the second meal of the day (known as ‘lunch’ in English), while in Québec it is the first meal of the day (known as ‘breakfast’

**Table 1.** Example of intercultural differences between France and Québec.

English	France	Québec
breakfast	petit-déjeuner	déjeuner
lunch	déjeuner	dîner
supper/dinner	dîner	souper

lai	adj.	pot au lait
laid	adj.	▶ fromage au lait
laid	n.	pinte de lait
laie	v.	biberon de lait
laie	n. f.	bouteille de lait
laie	n. f.	frère de lait
lais	n. m.	agneau de lait
lé	n. m.	consommation de lait
lei	n. m.	boîte de lait
let	n. m.	
let	adi.	

**Figure 4:** Examples provided for the term *lait* in *Antidote*.



**Figure 5:** Graphic representation of the main differences in the France/Québec translations.

in English). It is important to note such differences not only in order to adapt the wordlist to the target public, but also to alert learners and prepare them to use the proper terminology in a certain domain.

Certain terms are considered to be more idiomatic in a particular society. This is what we call co-occurrence, and the category I created for it is **Idiomaticity**. To verify the level of co-occurrence of a certain equivalent I used once more the tools provided in *Antidote*. One of the examples provided in the entry ‘expiration’ of the France equivalent is « brique de lait ». Since this is not used in Québec, I verified the co-occurrence for « lait » in *Antidote*. It appears that « pinte de lait » or « carton de lait » are widely used, while I did not

find any concurrence for « brique de lait » (Figure 4).

Therefore, I changed the example to « pinte de lait », since it is more idiomatic and more usual in Québec, as validated in *Antidote*.

Finally, for certain terms, I did not find any equivalent since the realities in Québec and France are not the same. I aggregated these words in the category **No equivalent**. The example provided for the term ‘junior’ is a ‘junior high school student’. In Québec, there is no such differentiation of students in high school. Therefore, no equivalent can be provided. I left the French equivalent proposed by the France lexicographers, which is « en classe de première ». In the Québec version of the dictionary there could be a “lexicographer’s note” to explain the difference in cultural realities.

Figure 5 represents the main differences found in the adaptation process of the dictionary. The main difference concerns the category of Usage, followed by Anglicism and Intercultural differences. This is helpful data for a lexicographer, since it emphasizes the type of equivalent that should be adapted and should be more carefully analyzed in the process of translating and adapting a dictionary to different speakers of the same language.

### Main errors

Besides the differences noted in the adaptation process, I also noted errors and gathered them in four categories: *Inflection*, *Spelling*, *Equivalent*, and *Definition*.

In the category **Inflection**, some entries did not provide the feminine inflection. I added it, since feminizing terms is important in Québec, as stated by Larivière (2000): “how can we be equal if invisible.” For example, the term ‘coach’ only provides the French equivalent « entraîneur ». I added « entraîneuse », which is commonly used in Québec.

I also noted certain **Spelling** errors, of grammar, spelling, typography, or obsolete use of terms. Errors of grammar were common in the examples. In the example of ‘lift’, the following sentence was provided: « Sa père l’a fait passer par dessus la barrière. » Since « père » is a masculine word I changed « sa » for « son ». For the entry ‘flight attendant’ the French equivalent is « hôtesse de l’air ». After verification (Figure 6), I found that this was an obsolete use of that word (although still correct), and changed it to « agent de bord », both because it tends to become more common in Québec and because it is the official term.

I also noted **Equivalent errors**. For example, in ‘decade’ the French equivalent

was « décade », while the proper one is « décennie ». Finally, from my personal view, I thought that certain **Definitions** were not well adapted to the Québec reality. For example, the following definition of ‘grape’: “a small green or purple fruit used to make wine”. Although it is well known in Québec that grapes are used to make wine, such activity is less common than in France. Therefore, this definition does not fit the Québec reality, where a grape is more often a “fruit that is eaten” and a native speaker would not have immediately the mental representation of a “fruit used to make wine”. However, I did not change the definition since that was not within my task, but noted it for further adjustments or updates. Figure 7 shows graphically the main errors noted during the adaptation process. It is clear that these consisted mainly of spelling mistakes, which are common in the making of a dictionary. Surprisingly, 35% of errors were in the nature of equivalents. The processes of verifying, updating, or even

1. Subject Field(s)	Domaine(s)
- Occupation Names (General)	- Désignations des emplois (Généralités)
- Air Transport Personnel and Services	- Personnel et services (Transport aérien)

<b>cabin crew member</b> CORRECT, OFFICIALLY APPROVED	<b>membre de l'équipage de cabine</b> CORRECT, MASC, OFFICIALLY APPROVED
<b>flight attendant</b> CORRECT	<b>agent de bord</b> CORRECT, MASC, OFFICIALLY APPROVED
<b>cabin attendant</b> CORRECT, OBSOLETE	<b>agente de bord</b> CORRECT, FEM
<b>stewardess</b> CORRECT, SEE OBS, OBSOLETE	<b>hôtesse</b> CORRECT, SEE OBS, FEM, OBSOLETE
<b>air hostess</b> CORRECT, SEE OBS, OBSOLETE	<b>hôtesse de l'air</b> CORRECT, SEE OBS, FEM, OBSOLETE
<b>flight hostess</b> CORRECT, SEE OBS, OBSOLETE	

Figure 6: Terminological entry of *flight attendant* in *Termium*.

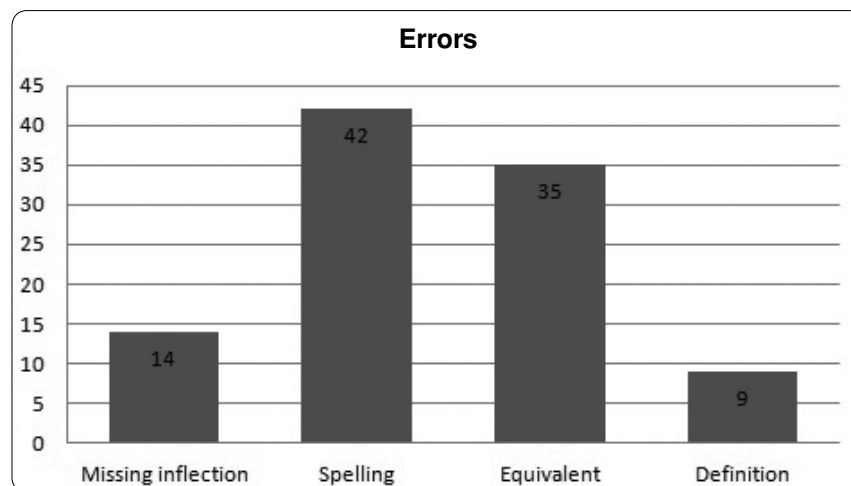


Figure 7: Graphic representation of the main errors.

adapting a dictionary then take all their importance here.

### Conclusion

While I already knew that some differences occur between the French spoken in France and that in Québec, I did not realize the full extent of this. After reviewing almost the entire wordlist of the dictionary and noting the main differences, I realized furthermore the importance of adapting a dictionary to the target user group. Although most French speakers in Québec would understand the wordlist and examples provided in the France version of the dictionary, that is still a version meant for another community, to speakers of another variety of French, which has grown separately from that in Québec. Given the will of people in Québec to claim their own identity as a nation, that differs from France, it is necessary for them to have dictionaries that reflect their own individuality. As I stated earlier “language is the reflection of the community in which it takes place.” I would add that dictionaries are the reflection of the communities in which they are compiled, since they are themselves the reflection of the languages they describe.

**Libro ingabiato** [*Book in a cage*], Elisabetta Gut, 1981  
Wood, Wire, and French-Italian dictionary. 4 ¾ x 4 ½ x 5 ¼ in.  
National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, DC



### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Authorization to use the online version of *Franqus* dictionary was graciously granted by H el ene Cajolet-Lagani ere.

<sup>2</sup> The numbers in brackets represent the frequency rate provided in *Antidote*. The first word is the France equivalent and the second is the equivalent I proposed based on the results of my research.

### References

- Antidote. Correcteur-Dictionnaires-Guides*. 2010. Montr al: Druide Informatique.
- DicoInfo. Le Dictionnaire fondamental de l'informatique et de l'Internet*. 2011. <http://olst.ling.umontreal.ca/cgi-bin/dicoinfo/search.cgi/>.
- Dictionnaire Qu b cois d'aujourd'hui*. 1992. Boulanger, J-C. Montr al: Dicorobert.
- Franqus. Dictionnaire de la langue fran aise. Le fran ais vu du Qu bec.  dition B TA*. 2011. Universit  de Sherbrooke. Facult  des lettres et sciences humaines. Sherbrooke. <http://132.210.238.8/dictio/accueil.jsp;jsessionid=1iqxrdqs4955q/>.
- Grand dictionnaire terminologique*. 2011. Qu bec: Office qu b cois de la langue fran aise. <http://www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/ressources/gdt.html/>.
- Harrap's Shorter. English-French/French-English Dictionnaire*. 7th edition. 2004. Edinburgh: Chambers Harrap Publishers.
- Larivi re, L.* 2001. *Pourquoi en finir avec la f minisation linguistique ou   la recherche des mots perdus*. <http://id.erudit.org/iderudit/000577ar/>.
- Le Grand Robert de la langue fran aise. Dictionnaire alphab tique et analogique de la langue fran aise*. 2011. <http://www.bib.umontreal.ca/>.
- Le Petit Robert. Dictionnaire alphab tique et analogique de la langue fran aise*. 1993. Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert.
- Le Robert & Collins Senior. Dictionnaire fran ais-anglais. Fourth Edition*. 1995. Great Britain and Paris: HarperCollins Publishers and Dictionnaires Le Robert.
- Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. Tenth Edition*. 2002. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster.
- Multi dictionnaire des difficult s de la langue fran aise*. 2008. De Villers, M-E. (ed.). Montr al:  ditions Qu bec/Am rique.
- Termium. The Government of Canada's terminology and linguistic date bank*. 2011. Ottawa: Translation bureau. Public Works and Government Services Canada. <http://www.termiumplus.gc.ca/>.