

WORD BOUNDARIES IN CANADIAN FRENCH PHONOLOGY

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Inspired by Delattre's question "Le mot est-il une entité phonétique en français?", many phoneticians and phonologists have investigated the status of the word in French phonology. While there is considerable caution expressed by the majority of researchers, the clear tendency is to minimize the role of the word, and to emphasize its subordinate status within the phonological phrase. Recently, however, evidence from phonotactic patterning and from morphophonological investigations, as well as from more specifically phonetic domains, has begun to re-establish the importance of word boundaries in French phonology.

In this paper, I will examine four types of allophonic variation in an informal variety of Canadian French (vowel laxing, lowering of /ɛ/, backing of /a/, and assibilation of apical stops). Each of these processes is sensitive either to the presence or the absence of word boundaries. This lower-level phonetic evidence, when coupled with more abstract data, allows us to re-affirm the importance of word boundaries, and the notion of "word", in French phonology.