



donut  
(yes, same as in English)



beigne



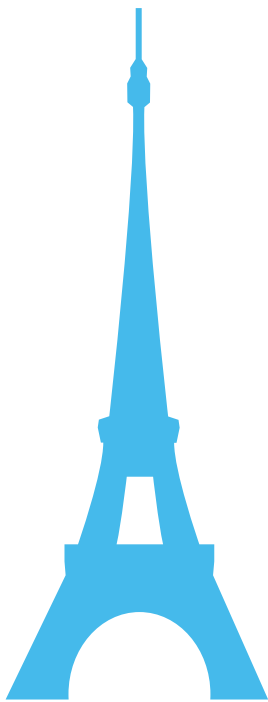
# French in Canada and French in France

50 Differences That Might Surprise You

**T**here is a common assumption that the French in France and Québec are one and the same. Of course it's the same language, observing the same rules of grammar, but much like the variations in Spanish and English from around the globe, Canadian French has a personality all its own. After relinquishing "New France" to Great Britain in 1763 as part of a peace agreement, France turned away from its former colony almost entirely, which allowed Québécois French to evolve independently.



Vocabulary from the 18th-century "François" or "King's French" is still widespread in Québécois. The French often find these phrases charmingly old-fashioned. And the Québécois, who live by a more relaxed, North American spirit and use the formal "vous" form of address only rarely, are amused by the French insistence on rather rigid social formalities.



While Parisians casually pepper their speech with imported Anglicisms, that is an absolute no-no in Montreal, where a proud Francophone minority is surrounded by Anglophones and works hard to preserve its language. In resisting the encroachment of English, Canadian French-speakers often translate North American English phrases and concepts literally, which, in a strange paradox, results in involuntary Anglicisms.

We hope you'll enjoy these examples of the ways in which European French and North American French diverge.



Introduction written by **Julien Didier** and **Valerie Dehant**

This collection was curated by **Coralie Tripier**.

Born and raised in France, Coralie is a professional translator who studied translation at universities in both France and Canada.

+1 866-707-6278  
www.smartling.com



Email



Courriel

EMAIL

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When you want to keep in touch with someone from Québec, do not ask for their "adresse email," like you usually would in France, but for their "adresse courriel." This term, created in the 1990s in Québec, mixes the words "courrier" (mail) and "électronique" (electronic), and French-speaking Canadians are fond of it.



Shopping



Magasinage

### SHOPPING

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A simple sentence such as “Let’s go shopping!” can be difficult to translate depending on the country you are in. While the French will use the English word and say “Allons faire du shopping!”, the Québécois have created a word derived from “magasin” (shop) and will rather say “Allons faire du magasinage!”, which never fails to make the French people smile.

***PFK***  
***KFC***



KFC

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In Québec, the Charter of the French Language, also known as Bill 101, requires French to be the prominent language on any signage. That is why, if you are looking for some KFC food (Kentucky Fried Chicken), you will have to be on the lookout for PFK signages! (Poulet Frit Kentucky). KFC remains the same in France, where it is pronounced "Kha eff sey."

## ANTI-ANGLICISMS IN QUÉBEC

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Coca light



Coke diète

### DIET COKE

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In Québec, the Charter of the French Language, also known as Bill 101, requires French to be the prominent language on any signage. France does not have such law, but the French love to adapt product names while still having them sound foreign. That is why in Québec, you will ask for a "Coke diète" (diet Coke), but in France, you will be served a "Coca light!"



STOP

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While driving through the province of Québec, do not forget to stop at the red "arrêt" (stop) signs! The French have decided to keep the English word and go with a big red STOP sign.



Parking



Stationnement

PARKING

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If you are driving around town in France, looking for a place to park, and ask for “un stationnement,” people might wonder what you mean. “Parking” is the word best used in France, while “stationnement” is used by the Québécois.



## ANTI-ANGLICISMS IN QUÉBEC

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Chewing gum



Gomme

GUM

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In France, it is recommended to have a “gomme” during your math lesson, but not a chewing gum. In Québec, chewing gum, being too English-sounding, has been replaced by “la gomme.”



Chatter



Clavarder

TO CHAT

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While the French borrow the English verb to chat to create "chatter" for online conversations (je chatte, tu chattes, etc.), the Québécois have mixed the words "clavier" (keyboard) and "bavarder" (to chat) to create the funny "clavarder."



Spam



Pourriel

SPAM

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Once again, the Québécois have demonstrated their sense of creativity: while the French stick to the English word spam to designate unwanted emails, the Québécois have created "pourriel," a mix between the words "poubelle" (garbage) and "courriel" (email).



Donut



Beigne

DONUT

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Once again, the French have decided to stick to the English word: "donut." The Québécois have found their own funny translation - "beigne à trou" (literally, pastry with a hole).

# Cultural differences

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Vérifier l'âge



Carter

TO CHECK ONE'S ID

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The United States and Canada are known for having a strict alcohol policy - in order to avoid underaged people from buying alcohol, they often tend to "carter" (ask for ID). In France, ID checks are less frequent, and there is no verb to translate that idea. You would simply say that "on a vérifié mon âge" (literally, they checked how old I was).

## CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

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 Bourré/Défoncé  Chaud/Gelé

DRUNK AND HIGH

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If you drink too much in France, you will be completely “bourré” (literally, stuffed), while you would feel “chaud” (literally, hot) in Québec. But if you have been smoking illegal substances, you might be “défoncé” (literally, broken) in France, or “gelé” (literally, frozen) in Québec.

## CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

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Poulets



Cochons

COPS

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Across the globe, people seem to love comparing policemen to different types of animals. But if you want to be understood, do not confuse them! If you hear “Les cochons!” (the pigs!) in Montreal, this does not mean that a bunch of pigs are coming running at you. Similarly in France, it is not an army of chickens you should fear when you hear someone telling you that “les poulets” (the chickens) are coming.

## CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

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 Épicier

 Dépanneur

### CORNER STORE

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If you need to buy a few vegetables to cook, ask for “le dépanneur” in Québec. Be careful to ask for “l’épicier” in France, and not for “le dépanneur,” as that would lead you straight to a mechanic who will probably not have the tomatoes you are looking for.



## CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

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Chercher la  
petite bête



S'énervé le poil  
des jambes

### TO NITPICK

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While the French will “chercher la petite bête” (literally, to look for the insect) when they nitpick, the Québécois will “s'énervé le poil des jambes” (to play with one's leg's hairs).

## CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

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La gueule de  
bois



Le lendemain de  
veille

### HANGOVER

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When they have celebrated too much and suffer a horrible headache, the French will feel so dehydrated that they will say that they have “la gueule de bois” (the wooden face), while the Québécois will say that they are suffering from a “lendemain de veille” (the day after the party, literally).

## CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

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Feu rouge



Lumière

### TRAFFIC LIGHTS

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When they are driving, the Québécois will be looking for “les lumières” (the lights), while the French, in a more pessimistic version, will be expecting “des feux rouges” (red lights).

## CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

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Avoir du mal



Avoir de la misère

TO HAVE TROUBLE

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When the Québécois have trouble doing something, they will say “avoir de la misère” (to have poverty doing something, literally), while the French will say “avoir du mal” (to have pain doing something, literally).

## CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

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Faire quelque chose  
correctement



Faire quelque chose  
comme du monde

### TO DO SOMETHING CORRECTLY

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For the Québécois, “faire quelque chose correctement” (to do something correctly, literally) is to “faire quelque chose comme du monde” (to do something like people do it). This raises interesting psychological and sociological questions about individuals and society.

ew!



Beurk!



Ouache!

EW!

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Even the onomatopoeia vary between the French spoken in France and the one spoken in Québec. If you show something that is really disgusting to a French person, they will shout “Beurk!”, while their Québécois counterpart will shout “Ouache!”

## CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

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Être sur son  
trente-et-un



Être sur son  
trente-six

### TO BE ALL DRESSED UP

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When the French are dressed “to the nines”, they are “sur leur trente-et-un” (on their thirty one, literally), while the Québécois are “sur leur trente-six” (on their thirty six, literally). The origin of these two unusual expressions is not certain, but it is supposed that they come from the different rules of the same card game, the goal of which was to gather 31 or 36 points.

# Old French

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Petit-déjeuner,  
Déjeuner, Dîner



Déjeuner, Dîner  
Souper

BREAKFAST, LUNCH, DINNER

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Words have evolved with time. When French emigrated to Québec in the 16th century, they brought the 16th century French language with them and the two dialects have since evolved differently, creating some possible confusion: you would take a "petit-déjeuner," then a "déjeuner" and finally a "dîner" in France, but in Québec, you would start with the "déjeuner," go on with the "dîner" and finish it off with a "souper."



## OLD FRENCH

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Chaussures



Souliers

## SHOES

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In Québec, some old French words can still be found. Saying that you need new “souliers” (shoes) and not “chaussures” will make you sound like a romantic novel character in France, but the Québécois will immediately take you to the nearest shoe shop.

## OLD FRENCH

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Voiture



Char

CAR

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The Québécois love driving around Montreal in their "char" (chariot, literally). This never fails to amuse the French, who immediately think about a carriage using horses, and not about one of their modern "voiture."



Peit(e) ami(e)



Blonde, Chum

GIRLFRIEND, BOYFRIEND

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In Québec, you date your “blonde” (girlfriend) or your “chum” (boyfriend). In France, where “petit(e) ami(e)” (small friend, literally) is used, une blonde can either describe a blonde girl, a cigarette or a light beer, but definitely not your girlfriend.

## OLD FRENCH

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Débardeur



Camisole

## TANK TOP

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The term "camisole" refers to a tank top in French-speaking Canada. But beware, if you ask for a "camisole" in France, you might find yourself being put a straightjacket on! Prefer the use of "débardeur" in Europe, which will not lead you into any such unfortunate situations.

## OLD FRENCH

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 Boisson

 Breuvage

## BEVERAGE

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In Québec, some old French words can still be found. That is the case for “breuvage,” which designates a non-alcoholic drink in Québec. This word would sound strange to a French person. They prefer using the word “boisson” in this case, which actually means alcoholic drink in Canada!

# Hidden Anglicisms in Québec

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 Ne plus avoir faim  Être plein

TO BE FULL

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If you are in a Montreal restaurant and want to say that you have eaten more than enough, - and maybe more than you should have - you could say "je suis plein(e)" (literally I am full)... but beware of the expression in France, which would be understood as "I am pregnant" (generally used for animals), or as "I am drunk." In that case in France, it is best to say "J'ai assez mangé" (I have eaten enough, literally).



Tomber  
amoureux



Tomber  
en amour

TO FALL IN LOVE

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While the Québécois “tombent en amour” with each other (fall in love), the French “tombent amoureux” (fall lovey). The first version indicates a strong English influence.



Stupide



Épais

THICK

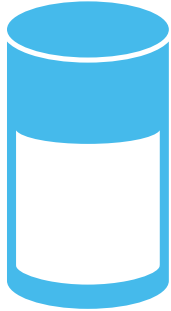
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Be careful when using the adjective “épais” (literally, thick) to describe someone, whether in France or in Québec! The French will think that you suggest they should go on a diet, while the Québécois will understand that you think they are stupid. A word better used with caution.



## HIDDEN ANGLICISMS IN QUÉBEC

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Boîte de  
conserve



Canne

CAN

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While the Québécois simply buy “cannes” to prepare a simple meal without refrigeration, the French will go for some “boîtes de conserve” (literally, preserving boxes).



Potes

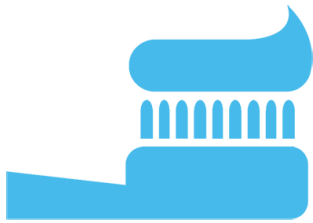


Chums

### BUDDIES

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The French will hang out with their “potes” while the Québécois will spend the night out with their “chums” (buddies). The first term is originally derived from “poteau” (post), something on which you can rely. The second comes from “chamber mate,” which has become chum.



Dentifrice



Pâte à dents

### TOOTHPASTE

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While the French will use “dentifrice” before going to bed, the Québécois will ask you for “pâte à dents” (literally, toothpaste).

## HIDDEN ANGLICISMS IN QUÉBEC

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Essence

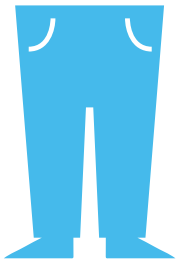


Gaz

GAS

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If your car broke down on the side of the road because you ran out of gas, you can ask for more “essence” in France, while the Québécois will be happy to help you find more “gaz.”



Un pantalon



Des pantalons

### PANTS

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The French that is spoken in Canada is sometimes under the influence of the English language. That is the case for “pantalons,” which is always used in its plural form in Québec, just like in English, while it is used in the singular in France.



De rien



Bienvenue

YOU'RE WELCOME

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The French that is spoken in Canada is sometimes under the influence of the English language. That is why some Québécois will tell you “Bienvenue” (literally, welcome) after you thanked them!

# Anglicisms in Québec

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Vérifier

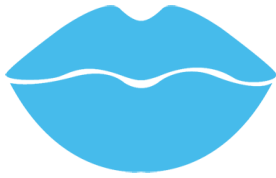


Checker

TO CHECK

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While in written and official documents, the Québécois excel in avoiding anglicisms (words borrowed from the English language and used in another), they do use quite a bit of them in their oral slang. The Québécois will tell you “Check ça!” (Check that!) while the French will shout “Regarde ça!” (Look at that!).



Flirter, embrasser,  
larguer



Cruiser, frencher,  
dumper

TO FLIRT, TO KISS, TO DUMP

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The lexicon of love varies greatly between the two countries. You would “cruiser” a Québécoise, but “flirter” with a Française (to flirt), in the hope of “la frencher” in Montreal, or “l’embrasser” in Paris (to kiss). But all that would come to an end when she would unfortunately te dumper in Québec or “te larguer” in Marseille (to leave).





Déposer



Donner un lift

### TO GIVE A LIFT

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Being so close to English speakers make the Québécois well aware of the expressions used in English. They have decided to keep some of the most useful phrases: if you want to offer your friend a ride back home, you would simply need to ask “Tu veux un lift?” (You want a lift?) in French-speaking Canada, while you would have to say the longer version “Tu veux que je te dépose?” (You want me to drop you off?) in France.



Tableau de bord,  
Freins, Clignotants,  
Se garer



Dashboard,  
Brakes, Flasher,  
Parquer

### DASHBOARD, BRAKES, BLINKERS, PARK

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A lot of French and Québécois love talking about cars — so if they want to do it together, they have to know the different words they use for its parts. The Québécois will generally use more English-derived words. They will read the speedometer on “le dashboard” (and not on le tableau de bord), will use “les brakes” (and not les freins) if they are going too fast and will flasher and not “mettre leur clignotant” (put their blinkers) to indicate that they have decided to “se parquer,” and not “se garer” (to park).

## And some others

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Gant de toilette



Débarbouillette

WASHCLOTH

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While the French use a “gant de toilette” (literally a glove of toilet) as a washcloth, the Québécois use a “débarbouillette,” which is a word derived from the verb “débarbouiller” (to clean up one’s face) and the diminutive suffix “-ette.”

## AND SOME OTHERS

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### FLIP FLOPS

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Not that anyone knows where this come from, but on a hot summer day in Québec, you would probably be wearing "gougounes" (flip flops), while "tongs" would be the thing to do in France.

## AND SOME OTHERS

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### TO PAINT

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Why make things complicated when they can be simple? To create the verb to paint, the Québécois took "peinture" (paint, noun), and added the suffix "-er" to it, to create "peinturer." The French came up with a different version, less similar to "peinture": "peindre."

## AND SOME OTHERS

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Bonnet



Tuque

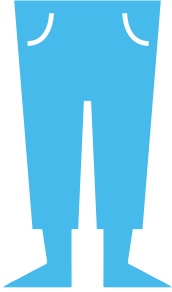
HAT

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The Québécois know a lot about winter, and they even have their own words to describe the pieces of clothing that will help them go through the negative temperatures. In Québec, you will not ask for a “bonnet” like in France, but rather for a “tuque.”

## AND SOME OTHERS

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Pantacourt



Capri

## CAPRI PANTS

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While the Québécois have kept the term “capri” to refer to capri pants, the French have created the word “pantacourt,” derived from “pantalon” (pants), by replacing the suffix “-lons” (which sounds like long) by “-court” (literally, short).