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Colloquial French Pronunciation

Colloquial French (or *communicative* French) pronunciation is by now the most frequent 'professional' form of French, also by many 'voice professionals' (including the highly prevalent dubbing industry), and various modern language courses, where the neutral accent is no longer as used as it was in the past.

It is therefore perceived by many French-speakers as the 'proper' neutral accent, and its influences can be even displayed by other European-French accents (Belgium and Switzerland, too) and those areas influenced by them (as in French-speaking Africa).

There are further, less advisable variants, which however are better considered as belonging to a *mediatic* accent, often displayed by less 'professional' and less phonetically trained people, such as journalists (including their honestly jarring '*unnatural* language', with too many hesitations, pauses and drawls!).

Its *oral vowels* are rather similar to those of the neutral accent, with merged /a, ạ/ realized as [ᴀ(ː)] (except for seldom and intentional /ạ/ [↓ɑ(ː)]), but with contextual [wa(ː), ʁa(ː), aʁV, a(ː)ʁ#] (*mediatic* possible ↓[wɑ(ː), ʁɑ(ː), ɑʁV, ɑ(ː)ʁ#]). /e#, ɛ#/ tend to be respected, albeit with well-known fluctuations (complete mergers are more *mediatic*, including intermediate ↓[ᴇ#] for both).

Of course, a more typically *mediatic* accent, may include marked fronter back vowels, particularly /u, ɔ/ ↓[ʉ(ː), ɵo(ː)].

Also *mediatic* are additional backer timbres before postnuclear /ʁ/, adding possible /ˌɛʁ/ ↓[ˌɐʁ], as in *certain*.

However, *nasalized vowels* show the biggest differences, with mostly undistinguished /ã, œ̃/, being both higher-low central [ɛ̃(ː)] (only rarely /œ̃/ [↑↑ɐ̃(ː)], and mostly not in *un*), except for /jã, wã/ [j̥ã(ː), w̥ã(ː)] sequences (not necessarily so, in more *mediatic* types ↓[j̥ɛ̃(ː), w̥ɛ̃(ː)]) words such as *bien, rien, point, moins*.

Also typical is the higher and backer realization of /ɔ̃/ ['ɔ̃(ː)], excepting partially rounded [ˌʌ̃] (*mediatic* possible ↓[ˌɔ̃]), probably in order to better distinguish /ɔ̃, õ/ in unstressed contexts, since /õ/ remains ['õ(ː), ˌõ]; some interesting examples: *entendre* [ʌ̃'tɔ̃ːdʁ], *enfin* [ʌ̃'fɛ̃], *content* [kõ'tɔ̃].

So no merger &/or confusion among these timbres occurs, in spite of what some descriptions claim!

As for the *consonants*, /ʁ/ is commonly [ʁ] with [ʀ] for emphasis; /t, d/, before /i, y, j/, stay as [ţ, ḑ] (against more *mediatic* possible [tʃ, dʒ]); while, [c, ɟ] for /k,

g/ of neutral pronunciation (before /i, e, ɛ, y, ø, œ, a; j/ and in syllable-final positions) are commonly uttered as palatal stops [c, ɟ], rather than postpalatal (against more *mediatic* possible [kç, gj̧]).

The rest corresponds to neutral pronunciation, including vowel length, complete voicing assimilation, as consonant and vowel devoicing does.

Inevitably, oscillations toward neutral and mediatic structures are more or less frequent, for the vowel, consonant and intonation patterns (shown in *fig 2*).

fig 1. Vocalic situation of the *colloquial* (or *communicative*) accent of contemporary French.

/i/ [i(ː)]
/y/ [y(ː)]
/e/ [e], /ø/ [ø(ː)]
/ə/ [ə]
/ɛ/ [ɛ(ː), ₒɛ], /œ/ [œ(ː), ₒə]
/a, ạ/ [ɐ(ː), wa(ː), aʁ]

/u/ [μ(ː)]
/o/ [ʊ(ː)]
/ɔ/ [ə(ː), ₒʊ]
(/ạ/ [↓ɑ(ː)], *rare*)

/iʁ#/ [ɪʁ#], /yʁ#/ [ʏʁ#]
/ɛʁ#/ [ɛ(ː)ʁ#, ₒɛʁ#], /œʁ#/ [œ(ː)ʁ#, ₒəʁ#]
/aʁ#/ [a(ː)ʁ#]

/uʁ#/ [ʊʁ#]
/ɔʁ#/ [ə(ː)ʁ#, ₒʊʁ#]

/õ/ [õ(ː)]
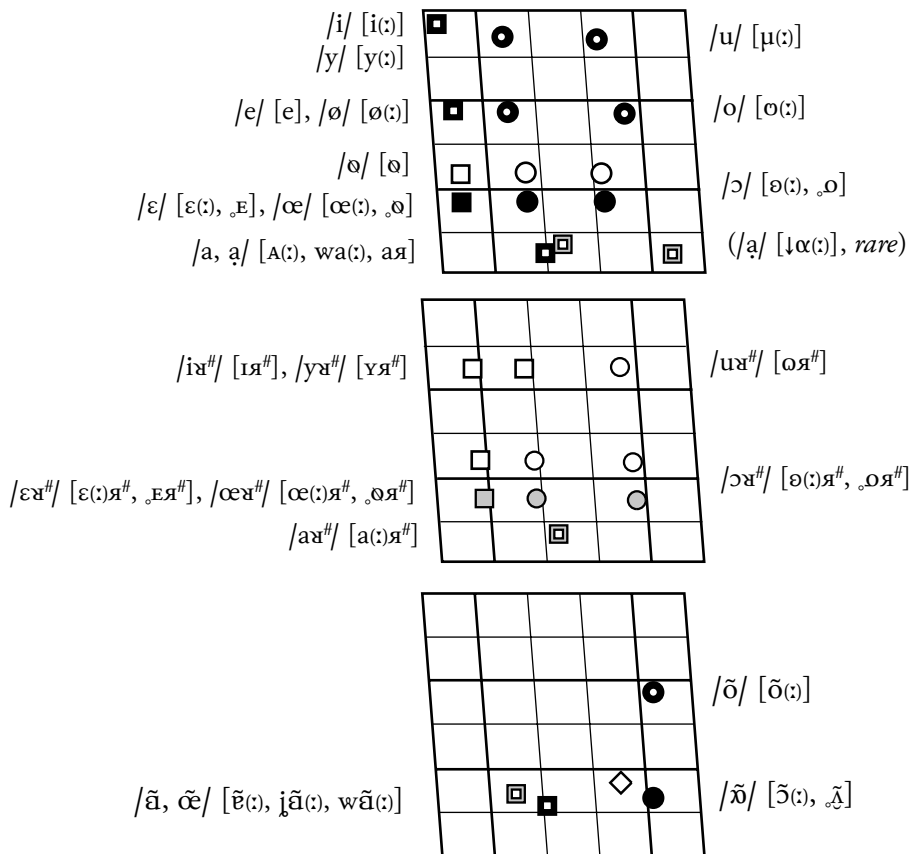/ã, œ̃/ [ɐ̃(ː), j̧ã(ː), wã(ː)]
/ɔ̃/ [ɔ̃(ː), ₐ̃]

fig 2. Intonation patterns of the *colloquial* (or *communicative*) accent of contemporary French.

/ / [·· ' ·· ' ·· ' ·]
/¿/ [¿ ·· ' ·· ' ·· ' ·]
/϶/ [϶ ·· ⁻ ·· ' ·· ' ·]
/¡/ [¡ ·· ⁻ ·· ' ·· ' ·]
/ʌ/ [ʌ ·· ' ·· ' ·· ' ·]

/./ [· ₋ ··]
/?/ [· ⁻ ··]
/;/ [· ⁻ ·]
/,/ [· ' ·]