

A Reclassification of the Occitan Language

by Robert Lindsay

According to *Ethnologue*, Occitan is currently one language. **This reanalysis will expand Occitan from one language to 22 languages.**

Occitan, or Langue d'Oc, is spoken in general in a swath across the south of France. It goes a bit into Spain in the Pyrenees and into far northwestern Italy. There is Occitan an outlier in Italy.

There are various classification methods for Occitan. One is to differentiate between Langue d'Oïl (French) and Langue d'Oc (Occitan). I do not agree that Occitan is particularly close to French. Occitan is about as far from French as Spanish and Italian are.

I would put the Oïl languages (including French) in a Northern Gallo-Romance and Rhaetian and Italian Gallo-Romance into a Southern Gallo-Romance with Arpitan as transitional between the two.

Ibero-Romance is a different split altogether. Occitan is better placed into a separate Romance category that I would call Catalan-Occitan. This analysis sees Occitan and Catalan as a singular branch of Romance. Catalan-Occitan is then properly put into Ibero-Romance.

It also recognizes that Occitan and Catalan were once a single language stretching across the south of France and into northwestern Spain. This language was very widely spoken, and at one time in the Middle Ages it was very widely used. It is "the language of the troubadours," the wandering minstrels who plied their trade across Southern Europe in the Middle Ages, though in truth, the troubadours

mostly came from Limousin and wrote their songs in a sort of [Poitou-Limousin dialect](#) that no longer exists.

From 500-1200, there was really [only one language](#) - Catalan-Occitan. Occitan only started distinguishing itself after 1200.

At the moment, Southern Languedocien has the [closest relationship](#) of all to Catalan - in fact, they are intelligible. Gascon is then the next closest to Catalan, but intelligibility data is lacking. The rest of Occitan is more distant from Catalan. Catalan speakers have a hard time understanding Auvergnat, Limousin, standard Languedocien and Provençal.

It is not the case, as often stated, that Catalan and Occitan are intelligible, but they are close. Catalan and Occitan probably have about [50% inherent intelligibility](#) when spoken, much more in writing. Speakers of only Catalan and Spanish report a hard time understanding Languedocien Occitan TV broadcasts. Cultivated speakers could pick up the other language in a few weeks with coaching. The [differences](#) between Catalan and Occitan are said to be greater than among the Scandinavian languages.

Occitan has been on decline for a long time, as the Langue d'Oil has been supplanting it for centuries. The decline began in 1539 when a French king ordered that langue d'oil be the official language of all of France. Despite a brief revival in the 1800's, it's been downhill ever since. Occitan speakers did not start speaking French in large numbers until [1885](#). Before that, there was only minor French influence on spoken Occitan. Since 1885, French influence on spoken Occitan has increased, in some cases dramatically.

The codification of the Parisien Langue d'Oil language as Standard French with the victory of the French Revolution and the corresponding fascist Jacobin war on all other languages caused Occitan to recede further into the background.

The French government is reactionary/fascist on the subject of language. The Jacobin Constitution baldly states that "French is the language of the state" and allows for no other languages. Hence, Occitan receives no state support in any way.

Occitan still has about [8 million people who can understand it and 3 million who can speak it to one degree or another](#). Estimates of the true number of speakers [range](#) from 1-3.7 million. Occitan is surely a modern language and does not lack for vocabulary - it has [between 250,000 and 1 million words](#), though many say that this is an exaggeration.

Occitanists like to say that Occitan is all one language, but this is a political statement. They say this in order to unite the dying language and prevent it from splintering.

The Occitanist position is increasingly popular. For instance, *Wikipedia* is calling all of the Occitan languages "dialects."

There are two centralized ways of writing all Occitan dialects, one based curiously enough on a Medieval standard. Around 1850, an Occitanist poet named Frederic Mistral invented a standard based on his own Provençal language, but this solution has not caught on well. The second is Neo-Occitan, a new koine language created more recently.

Occitan is spoken most often by those over 50, except in Italy and Spain. Occitan is only protected in Spain and Italy, where the respective forms of Aranese and Transalpine Provençal are spoken.

If you hear Occitan, it sounds like some curious cross between Spanish and French, sort of the way that Catalan sounds.

It's not true that Occitan is one language as the Occitanists centered in the south of the region insist.

The intelligibility among Occitan lects seems to be [as I suspected](#). People with exposure to the other lects can pick them up pretty quickly, but someone who has never heard the other varieties has a hard time understanding them. This is called learned bilingualism. If learned bilingualism is the rationale for saying that Occitan is a single language, it stands on precarious scientific grounds.

Nevertheless, intelligibility in Occitan remains a very controversial subject. On the one hand, speakers say they can't understand speakers of the same lect a few miles away; on the other hand, Occitan speakers say they can understand totally different varieties from far away very well.

At this point, it is time for some scientific intelligibility testing to sort all of this contradictory information out. Intelligibility testing has already been done with Occitan. It did find [high, but by no means complete](#), intelligibility between major Occitan lects (Bec 1982). This suggests that intelligibility among Occitan lects is marginal, possibly on the order of 80% among major forms. I would appreciate it if anyone privy to this study could contact me.

Others have put the figure about where I did – at [70-85% intelligibility](#) between major Occitan languages.

It is often said that French and Occitan speakers can communicate well enough. This is not the case. There are many French speakers living in Occitania who say that they [cannot understand a word](#) of Occitan.

A good [overview](#) of Occitan is here.

Method: Literature and reports were examined to determine the intelligibility of the various dialects of Occitan. >90% intelligibility was considered to be a dialect of a major Occitan language. <90% intelligibility was considered to be a separate language split off from

Macro-Occitan. The emphasis was on intelligibility more than than structural factors, but structural factors were included.

Results: This treatment expands *Ethnologue's* one Occitan language to 22 Occitan languages.

Gascon is a Southern Occitan macrolanguage spoken in southwestern France and barely over the border into Spain. It has 256,000 speakers, 250,000 in France, but other figures put the number at 500,000. Gascon has some affinities to Basque - it is said to have a Basque substrate - but it is not close to Basque at all. Gascon is probably closer to Catalan than anything else (even closer than it is to Aragonese), however, there is no continuum between Gascon and Aragonese at the border. Instead, there is an abrupt transition.

Gascon is best seen as its own variety of Occitan outside of both Northern and Southern Occitan. It has heavy influence of Basque and Aragonese that makes it very different from the rest of Occitan.

Along with the Basque substrate, Gascon is a transition between Ibero-Romance (Occitan proper - Aragonese - Catalan) and Gallo-Romance (langues d'oïl).

In contradiction to the Occitan centralizers, Gascon speakers say they speak a separate language and resent both being referred to as speakers of a dialect of Occitan and what they see as the cultural imperialism of Occitan politics centered in Toulouse.

In France, Gascon is spoken in the departments of Landes, Gers, Hautes-Pyrénées, the eastern parts of Pyrénées-Atlantiques and the western parts of Haute-Garonne and Ariège, and it is still used actively by many people.

50 years ago, near La Réole, France, there were still monolingual Gascon speakers among the older people. People were still being

brought up speaking Gascon as [recently](#) as the early 1980's. However, in France, it is not being taught much to children.

Gascon speakers have a [hard time](#) understanding Limousin, and Languedocien speakers say it's hard to understand Gascon and vice versa. However, it is [easier](#) for Gascon speakers to understand Languedocien ([though intelligibility is still difficult](#)) than vice versa due to the French-like regularity of Languedocien. For example, "How are you?" is "Quin hes?" and "Cossi fas?" respectively in Gascony and Languedoc. It goes on like that through the Gascon-Languedocien lexicon. It's clear we have two completely separate languages here.

Around Agen, there is a [transition](#) between Guyennais, Gascon and Languedocien. One village can understand the next, but once you get 10-15 miles away, things get difficult. Provençal speakers say Gascon is a [foreign language](#). Gascon speakers [can't understand a word](#) of Auvergnat.

It makes sense to split Gascon into a West and East Gascon. The border would run from Artix-Pau in the south to Marmande-Agen in the north. East Gascon would then start at around Pau and Agen and West Gascon at Artix and Marmande. These distinctions represent the variant influences of Bordeaux in the west and Toulouse in the east.

West Gascon is spoken from Bordeaux in the north to the Basque country in the south. In the east, it runs to Artix in the south and to Marmande in the north. Its differences with East Gascon revolve around the influence of the large city of Bordeaux on the language.

Dialects include Bazadais, Marmandais, Bordalés and Médoc.

Bazadais is spoken around the town of Bazas, famous for its cows. Marmandais is spoken around the town of Marmande.

Bordalés is spoken around Bordeaux. It is probably in very bad shape. It was declining badly even 50 years ago. There is actually a

transitional Occitan-langue d'oil (Saintongeais) region around Bordeaux.

The region around Bordeaux is notorious for its sharp linguistic breaks. One early chronicler [estimated](#) that the distance between West Gascon Limonde and Saintongeais-speaking Pays Gabay north of Limonde to the Saintonge border was 50% (further than English and German), while the distance between Limonde and Perigord Limousin speaking Montpon-Menesterol just to the east was 25%.

There is evidence of a [very sharp ancient linguistic border](#) between Gascon and Old Saintongeais-Limousin on the southern border of Saintonge from St. Cliers to Coutras.

Médoc is a dialect spoken on the Médoc Peninsula south of the Gironde.

Landes is a West Gascon language spoken in Southwestern Maritime France in the Aquitaine region. As it is not even intelligible within itself (it differs so much that it is [hardly intelligible even from village to village](#)), it must be a separate language. Some say that Landes is nearly a dead language, but others say that it is [still spoken](#) in the villages.

The coast near Biscarosse gave up Landes long ago, but now even in the inland villages like Rion de Landes and Parentis en Born it is hard to find a speaker. The real Landes died around 1950. The current dialect is very Frenchified.

East Gascon is spoken from Pau to the Ariege River in the south and from Agen to Toulouse in the north. It represents the influence of the large city of Toulouse. Even between the cities and Pau (East Gascon) and Artix (West Gascon), which are very close together, communication is nearly impossible.

This language is probably in very bad shape. It is probably [extinct](#) in the Rivière-Basse region around the towns of Marciac, Plaisance and Maubourguet and in the Vic-Bihl region just to the west around Riscle. In Tarbes, Lannemezan and Lourdes, speakers are [almost impossible](#) to find. The eastern border with Languedocien is in the Ariège.

[Neraqués and Lomagne Gascon](#) are two East Gascon dialects. Neraques is spoken in Nerac, just southwest of Agen in the Lot et Garonne. Lomagne Gascon is spoken to the far northeast of the Gascon language, southeast of Agen down towards Toulouse.

Pyrenean Gascon is a macrolanguage that is [unintelligible](#) with the Gascon of the plains. This language is [the most divergent member of Occitan](#), probably due to very strong Basque influence. Some would put it outside of Occitan Proper altogether.

The borders of Pyrenean Gascon run from the Ariège in the east to Bearn in the west and to the Spanish border (except in the Aran Valley).

Pyrenean Gascon is nearly a dead language in France, only spoken by 1% of the population. In the region of Tarbes, Lourdes and Bagnères, there are almost no speakers left.

In Bearn, Pyrenean Gascon is still [heavily](#) used. In 1994, [fully 26% of the population](#) spoke Béarnais. Since then, the number has probably collapsed precipitously, possibly down to 5-6%.

It makes sense to split Pyrenean Gascon into three separate languages. Gascon speakers in the east of Béarnais have a hard time understanding the speakers in the west of Béarnais. They also have a hard time understanding the Couserans spoken in the Upper Ariège near the Foix and Andorra.

Although it makes no linguistic sense, *Bearnese* is often split off a separate dialect of Pyrenean Gascon. Dialects of Bearnese include [Aspés, Ossau Bearnese, and Palois](#). Bearnese is spoken in Bearn.

West Pyrenean Gascon covers the western part of Bearn. It is here that there is the heaviest Basque influence of all. Speakers in the east of Bearn can understand speakers just to the east in Bigorre and Lourdes better than they can the speakers of Western Bearn.

Oloronais (Aspois) is a dialect of Béarnais spoken in Oloron that borders on Souletin Basque. The actual linguistic border between Béarnais and Basque is in between Aramits and Tardets.

Central Pyrenean Gascon covers most of the Pyrenean Gascon region from eastern Bearn all the way to Ariège. Intelligibility is poor with both Western Bearn and Couserans in the Ariège.

Bigourdan is a dialect of Central Pyrenean Gascon spoken in Bagnères de Bigorre region. Subdialects are [Argelès, Aure, Bagnères, and Tarbais](#). Bagnères is spoken around the city of Bigorre itself, and Tarbais is spoken around the town of Tarbes.

Eastern Pyrenean Gascon is spoken in the far east of the Pyrenean Gascon region by the border with Languedocien and Catalan and over the border into the Aran Valley. Central Pyrenean Gascon speakers have a hard time understanding those in the Couserans in the Upper Ariège by Foix, Rousillon and Andorra.

Dialects include Aranese, Ariegois, Commingese, Couseranais, Saurtois, and Contadels.

Aranese is an Eastern Pyrenean Gascon dialect spoken by most of the 6,000 people living in the Aran Valley in the Spanish Pyrenees, where it has official status. It has Spanish, Aragonese and old Catalan [influences](#), but at the moment it is under [very heavy Catalan](#)

[influences](#) such that many Occitanists regard it as an outrageously degenerated dialect.

Aranese is intelligible with Commingese across the border in France. Aranese is [not intelligible](#) with Spanish, French, Catalan or the rest of Occitan.

[Pujoloand Canejan](#) are Aranese dialects.

Ariegois is a Pyrenean Gascon dialect spoken in the Upper Ariège.

Sauratois is an Ariegois dialect spoken in the Saurat region northeast of Tarascon on the Ariège River. Couseranais is an Ariegois dialect spoken in the Couserans northwest of Andorra. It still has a few speakers. Contadels is an Ariegois dialect spoken in Vicdessos north of Andorra. There is a very heavy Languedocien and Catalan influence on this dialect. This is actually a Gascon-Catalan transitional dialect.

Southern Occitan is a branch of Occitan that stretches across Southern France near the ocean. It includes Languedocien, Maritime Provençal, Nissart, and Rhodanian Provençal. This branch has more Iberian influence in the west and more Ligurian Southern Gallo-Romance influence in the east.

[Languedocien](#) is a Southern Occitan macrolanguage that has 1 million speakers in an area in a line going from north of Andorra - Aude - Fenoullens - Leucate in the south (border with Catalan), from Toulouse to Oust in the west (border with Gascon), in a line running from Toulouse - Albi - Agde in the north (border with Guyennais) and at Bassin de Thau in the east (border with Provençal).

Languedocien sounds like a mixture of Spanish and French in the north or Spanish and Catalan in the south.

Languedocien speakers have a [hard time](#) understanding Limousin, [Auvergnat](#) and Gascon. Languedocien speakers have a [hard time](#) being understood by the Provençal speakers in Toulouse.

Along with Provençal, this language is more conservative and closer to the Medieval Occitan.

If you try to learn Occitan now as a second language, you will learn Languedocien. Attempts to standardize writing of Languedocien have not been successful. An Occitan koine is being promoted out of the University of Montpellier that some Occitan speakers have referred to as an [Occitan Esperanto](#).

All across Languedoc, most of the older people and many young people [still speak](#) Languedocien. In [Carcassone](#), all street signs are bilingual in Occitan, Occitan is an obligatory subject for primary school students, and there are [22,000 speakers](#) in the city. Nevertheless, it is not being learned much by children in general in the region as a whole.

It makes sense to split Languedocien into a Ibero-Languedocien and a North Languedocien (or Franco-Languedocien), the first more like Catalan, Spanish, Gascon and Aragonese and the second more like French and the rest of Occitan.

North Languedocien is a Languedocien language with borders running from Toulouse - Albi - Bassin de Thau in the north and east and around the Bages-Sigues Lagoon in the south. This language lacks the strong Catalan influence of Ibero-Languedocien. Instead, it has more French influence.

There are various dialects within North Languedocien that are quite divergent. Dialects include Besierenc, Narbonés, Carcassés, and Pezenas.

These are spoken around the cities that they are named after and are said to be [unrecognizable from one region to the next](#), but until we get specific intelligibility data, we can't split them.

Ibero-Languedocien is spoken in the south from Toulouse and Albi down through the Ariège, the Foix, the Aude, the Fenouillines and over to the coast at Leucate, possibly extending north to Carcassonne and Narbonne. This language is rooted in Iberian phonetics.

Ibero-Languedocien speakers feel that they have excellent communication [only](#) with Catalan. With the rest of Occitan, they feel that they are speaking another language, and there are communication problems.

Ibero-Languedocien is intelligible with Catalan. This dialect is the [closest](#) of all Occitan lects to literary Catalan and is spoken in the part of Southwest France right next to Catalonia. Ibero-Languedocien speakers can understand Catalan [easier](#) than they can understand Gascon.

The border between Ibero-Languedocien and Catalan proper begins in the Languedocien-speaking [Fenouillèdes](#) along the Agly River. To the south, Catalan is spoken - to the north, it is Languedocien. But that boundary is fairly sharp. On the coast, the transition zone occurs from Leucate to Le Barcares and Salces. The true transition zone occurs in the area north of Andorra. The Catalan of Formigueres is basically the same language as the Languedocien of Usson just to the north.

Tolosenc is a dialect of this language spoken around the city of Toulouse. It has Gascon influences. In the rural areas around Toulouse, [almost everyone](#) over 25 understands Tolosenc. In this area, many people over 40 were raised speaking Tolosenc as a first language, but most have forgotten it by now. However, in Toulouse proper, Occitan speakers have gone [from 50% in 1950 to 10% today](#). Foissenc is spoken in the Foix.

Agathois is a divergent Languedocien lect spoken on the coast town of Agde. It is very different from the Besierenc dialect spoken in Beziers and Vias, which were wine-growing regions. Beziers and Vias received many Spanish immigrants to pick grapes in the vineyards and received many more during the Spanish Civil War. As a result, Besierenc now has heavy Spanish admixture. But Agde, on the coast, received no Spanish influx, and now communication is [sometimes difficult](#) between Agathois and Besierenc speakers.

Provençal is a very famous Southern Occitan macrolanguage that is spoken further east than Languedocien all the way to the Italian border. It has 200,000 speakers. Provençal is [spoken](#) in the departments of Alpes-Maritimes (except the eastern corner), Bouches-du-Rhône, Var, Vaucluse, in the southern parts of Alpes de Haute-Provence, and the eastern parts of Gard.

Provençal is said to be close to the Gallo-Italic Piedmontese language.

Auvergnat speakers say they [cannot understand](#) the Mompelhierenc spoken in Montpellier, and there is [marginal intelligibility](#) with Nîmes and Sète. [People](#) with one parent who spoke South Auvergnat and another who spoke Provençal were not taught Occitan because the lects were too different. This implies that even South Auvergnat has poor intelligibility with Provençal.

Limousin speakers who move to the Provençal region say that the two [feel very much like separate languages](#). Provençal speakers say that Gascon is a [foreign language](#), they [cannot understand](#) Vivaroalpine and they even [have a hard time](#) with Languedocien.

Provençal, along with Languedocien, is closer to the Medieval Occitan language and is more conservative.

[Dialects](#) include Cévenol, Maritime Provençal, Marsillargues, Mompelhierenc, Bas-vivarais, Lunellois, Aptois, Bagnoulen, Barjoulen-

Draguignan, Canenc, Coumtadin, Foursquare-Manousquin, Grassenc, Marsihés, Maures, Castellane Provençal, and Sestian.

Cévenol is spoken in the Cevennes Mountains north and northwest of Nîmes and is [doing well](#). Maritime Provençal is spoken around the Cote d'Azur, is doing well and is widely spoken, especially as Marsillargues in Marseilles. Mompelhierenc, spoken in Montpellier, has heavy Languedocien influence. Bas Vivarois is spoken in the lower half of the Ardeche region. Lunellois is spoken in Lunel between Montpellier and Nimes and still has speakers.

Aptois is spoken around the town of Apt north of Marseilles. Barjoulen-Draguignan is spoken around the towns of Barjemon and Draguignan in the hills north of the French Riviera. Canenc is spoken around the Cannes. Grassenc is spoken on the French Riviera.

Rhodanian is spoken around Arles, Avignon and Nîmes, is apparently not intelligible with the rest of Provençal and may be more than one language. Rhodanian speakers from around Nîmes say that they [cannot understand](#) other speakers from villages only 12 miles away. This is actually a Languedocien language that underwent Provençal phonetic changes in the late 1700's, resulting in a Provençal tongue. This probably accounts for its diversity.

[Dialects](#) include Arlaten, Bagnoulen, Camarguen and Nimoues. Arlaten is spoken around Arles. Bagnoulen is spoken around the town of Bagnols sur Centre. Camarguen is spoken around Camargue Bay. Nimoués is spoken in Nimes.

Nissart is a Southern Occitan dialect spoken in Nice. It has [very heavy influence](#) from the local Ligurian Gallo-Italian dialects. It is best seen as a transitional dialect between Gavot Vivaro-Alpine and Ligurian. Based on its history, a more proper analysis would be that it was a Ligurian language that became Provençalized by Alpine Provençal speaking immigrants from the mountains coming to work on the coast

after 1861. However, others say that it has been part of the Occitan area since the Middle Ages.

The Nizzardos, residents of Nice, spoke a Ligurian dialect before Nice was taken over by France in 1860; since then, much French has gone in. It is similar to the Mentonasque and Monegasque spoken in Menton and Monaco (the first Occitan and the other Ligurian). Intelligibility between Nissart and Royasque Ligurian is [very limited](#).

Nissart is in very bad shape; it is a dying language mostly spoken by older people, when it is spoken at all.

[Dialects](#) include Esteron, High Vésubie, and Northern Nissart.

[Mentonasq](#) is a curious Gavot Alpine Provençal dialect related to Nissart spoken near Monaco in and near the town of Menton. It has a lot of Ligurian influences like Nissart. This is [intelligible with Nissart](#) and is apparently a Nissart dialect.

This is best seen as transitional between Nissart and Intermelio to the east, a Ligurian dialect with strong Occitan influence. Studies have shown that Mentonasq is between Gavot Alpine Provençal (Nissart) and Royasque (Brigasc)-Pignasque Ventimiglian) Ligurian (spoken in the Roya Valley in France and Pigna in Italy on the border), with an emphasis on the Occitan. About [2/3 of the words](#) are Provençal.

There are still those who [insist](#) that this language is basically Ligurian with strong over layer of Provençal. [Intelligibility](#) between Mentonasq and Ligurian Royasque is better than between Nissart and Royasque but is still somewhat marginal.

Although it is close to Nissart, Mentonasq is also quite different from it.

Monegasque is [quite different](#) from Mentonasq. It is mostly spoken by older people, fisherman and rural types. There is bilingual signage.

But the language is in bad shape, as the young do not speak it, and there are many tourists.

Roquebrunasq is a dialect of Mentonasque, spoken on the Roquebrun-Cap Martin just to the west of Menton. It is [somewhat different](#) from Mentonasque. It is dying out. The similar [Gorbarin and Castellarois](#) are spoken in Gorbio and Castellar. Gorbarin is particularly close to Mentonasc. Like Nissart, these are Gavot dialects transitional to Ligurian.

Northern Occitan is a branch of Occitan that is spoken in the north of the Occitan region and also over by the Italian border. There are great differences between Northern and Southern Occitan. For instance, 30% of the vocabulary of Auvergnat is [not found](#) in Southern Occitan.

One way to look at this is to say that the languages in this region - Limousin, Auvergnat and Vivaro-Alpin, are part of something called [Medio Gallo-Roman](#), which is really in between the langue d'oc proper of the south - Gascon, Languedoc and Provençal - and the langues d'oïl to the north and Arpitan to the east. Another way to look at it is to say that Northern Occitan is closer to Arpitan than to the rest of Iberian-dominated Southern Occitan.

Limousin is a Northern Occitan macrolanguage spoken in France and has over 100,000 speakers. It is spoken in Limousin Province and over the western border into the far eastern part of Saintonge and the Périgord in North Aquitaine. North Périgord in Aquitaine has Saintongeais influences. South Périgord speaks Guyennais.

Limousin is [still widely spoken](#) in the Limousin region and in Northern Dordogne in Aquitaine.

Limousin may have once been many separate languages, at least in the Dordogne department. Older residents in the Périgord Vert near Nontron report that from 1930-1970, it was not unusual for different

villages to have Limousin dialects [so different](#) that one village could not understand the next, and they had to resort to the use of a koine.

[Gascon](#), Provençal, [Languedocien](#) and Auvergnat speakers say they [cannot understand](#) speakers of Limousin.

Charente Limousin is a Limousin dialect that is very hard to classify. It extends from [Confolens south to Aubeterre](#). This is an Occitan-Oil transition zone with an emphasis on the Occitan. So these are [Limousin dialects transitioning to Charentais](#) langue d'oil.

Between Confolens and Ruffec around Chatain, there is a transitional dialect between langue d'oc and langue d'oil that is [nevertheless intelligible](#) with the Charentais spoken in Ruffec. This is probably a Charentais dialect transitional to Limousin.

This province is generally langue d'oil speaking and has been so since the original Limousin speakers were eliminated by the Black Plague in the 1300's and replaced by langue d'oil speakers, but the area around the Charente River in the far east of the province has long spoke Occitan and never underwent replacement.

Saint-Eutrope and Montberonés are Charente Limousin [dialects](#). Montberonés is spoken in Montbron, and Saint-Eutrope is spoken in the town of the same name.

South Limousin is a separate language spoken south of Haute Vienne in Limousin south to the Limousin border. It is closer to Auvergnat and Languedocien.

Haute Vienne North Limousin speakers understand [no more than 60%](#) of the South Limousin of Ussel. Between Upper Limousin in Limoges and Lower Limousin in Brive, there are many [confusing phonetic changes](#) that make it hard for North Limousin speakers to understand Brive speakers.

Corrèzese is a dialect of South Limousin spoken around the city of Correze. Correzese speakers can understand Auvergnat and [vice versa](#). Corrèzese is best seen as a Limousin dialect transitional to Auvergnat.

[Sarladais](#) is a South Limousin dialect spoken in Sarlat in Aquitaine just southeast of Limousin. It has strong Guyennais influences.

Monédières Limousin, a variety of South Limousin spoken in the Monédières Hills near Correze, is a separate language. For one thing, it does not even appear to be intelligible within itself. Some varieties of Bas Limousin in the Monédières Hills near Correze have a hard time understanding each other. For another, Limousin speakers say they have a [harder time](#) understanding Monédières Limousin than they do Auvergnat as a whole. This is more than one language.

Guyennais is a highly divergent lect, possibly a separate language, spoken in a swath across central Aquitaine, northern Languedocien and southwest Auvergnat. It is transitional between Gascon, Languedocien, Limousin and Auvergnat. In the South Perigord, the influences are Saintongeais, Gascon and Languedocien. To the east, the influences are Languedocien, Dauphinois Provençal and Auvergnat.

In the north, the boundary with Limousin and Auvergnat is a line from Bordeaux - Bergerac - Carlux - S. Cerre - Latronquiere - southern border of Auvergne to the Ardeche border. To the south, Guyennais borders Languedoc along a line running from Castelsarrasin - Montalban - Cordes - Albi to the border of Languedoc at Millau and the Cevannes.

Guyennais is still widely spoken. In Saint Cirq in Dordogne Department, [all of the elderly](#) speak Guyennais as a first language and continue to use it amongst themselves at all times.

Although Guyennais is typically lumped under the rubric of Languedocien, others lump Guyennais in with Limousin, saying that there is [no way](#) that Guyennais-Limousin is the same language as Languedocien-Gascon. The [best view](#) is that Guyennais was close to Limousin and Auvergnat, but it underwent extensive Languedocienization caused by the expansion of Toulouse to the north from the 800's to the the 1200's. At the moment, it is probably closest to Limousin and possibly secondarily with Auvergnat.

There is [difficult intelligibility](#) on the border of Guyennais and Gascon. Quercynois, Rouergat and Carladezien are [not intelligible](#) with Languedocien.

Guyennais is very similar to the South Limousin spoken in Brive and South Auvergnat. Specific intelligibility data between Guyennais and Limousin and Auvergnat in general is not available.

There is a strong tendency to want to split this off as a separate high level language within Occitan, but there's no legitimacy to do so yet based on the available intelligibility information.

Haut Quercinois, Bas Quercinois, Rouergat, Bergeracois, Agenais, Gevaudan, Carladézien, and Aurillacois are dialects of Guyennais.

Quercynois (Carcinòl) is spoken in the Quercy in Midi-Pyrenees. Rouergat is spoken around the city of Rouerge. Carladézien is spoken in Auvergne and is still doing very well. It is transitional to Auvergnat. Bergeracois is spoken around Bergerac. Agenais is spoken in Agen and has Gascon influences. Gévaudan is spoken in the southern part of Lozère, and Aurillacois is spoken in the Aurillac. Both have Auvergnat [influences](#).

North Limousin, spoken north of Correze in Haut Vienne to the Marche and over to Nontron in the west, is a separate language. North Limousin speakers only have 60% intelligibility of Ussel South

Limousin. Confolentais, a dialect of North Limousin, is a very peculiar Limousin dialect spoken in Confolens in Saintongeais.

Millevaches is spoken on the Millevaches Plateau south of Limoges.

Lemojand is spoken in Limoges.

Monts de Blond Limousin is a North Limousin lect said to be so different from all other Limousin types that it must be a separate language. It is spoken in the Haut Vienne in the Monts de Blond region around Blond between Nantiat and Confolens near the Charente border. There is heavy influence from Charentais langue d'oil and Creusois.

Nontronnais is a North Limousin dialect that is [so unusual](#) that it must be a separate language. It is spoken in the North Perigord region around the town of Nontron near the Saintonge border. It has heavy Saintongeais langue d'oil influences.

Creusois (Marchois) is a language spoken in La Marche or the Croissant in North Limousin and over into Auvergne. It extends roughly from La Rochefoucauld in Charente to Saint-Priest-Laprugne just over the Auvergne border in Loire in the south and from Bellac in Limousin over to Montlucon and Moulins in Auvergne to the north. The eastern portion in Auvergnat underwent [much more extreme changes](#) than the western portion.

It borders on and is influenced by the oil languages Berrichon and Bourbonnais in the north and east and Poitou and Charentais in the west but is intelligible with none of them. In the northeast, there is a [50 mile wide Creusois zone](#) between Limousin and Berrichon. Some say it is a langue d'oil with heavy Occitan influence, but a better analysis is of a langue d'oc with heavy oil influence. To the southeast around Vichy, there is some Arpitan influence.

This language is still widely spoken in places. 15 years ago, the dialect of Saint-Priest-la-Feuille in Northern Limousin was [still spoken](#) by

everyone over 40. A bit to the west, 15 years ago, Gartempaud, spoken in the village Gartempe, was still spoken by most residents over the age of 50.

[Dialects](#) include Western Creusois, Eastern Creusois, Central Creusois and Montluçonnais.

Montuluconnais is spoken around the town of Montlucon in Auvergnat.

It is often thought to be a part of Limousin, but Creusois speakers have a [hard time](#) understanding Limousin. Auvergnat speakers [cannot understand](#) Creusois. There is [poor intelligibility](#) with Berrichon, a langue d'oil.

This is basically an Occitan-Oil transitional dialect with an emphasis on Occitan.

[Auvergnat](#) is a North Occitan macrolanguage that has 1.35-1.5 million speakers. Auvergnat is spoken in [an area](#) covering the departments of Cantal (except the Aurillac region), Haute-Loire, and Puy-de-Dôme and extending to the Gannat region in Allier, the Saint-Bonnet-le-Château region in Loire, and the western border areas in Ardèche in Rhones-Alps Province.

In Auvergne, [reports](#) indicate that nearly everyone over age 35 can speak Occitan, and perhaps 50% of those age 15-35 can at least understand the language. 49% of the population supports bilingual signage.

A neo-language called [Aleppo](#) (Literary and Pedagogical Auvergnat) has been created. It is used to teach students who come from a variety of educational backgrounds and by writers who wish to enrich their prose by using loans from other dialects.

Every village has its own dialect, and there is [often problematic intelligibility](#) even from one village to the next.

People who learn standardized Occitan fairly well are completely lost listening to Auvergnat. Auvergnat in general [cannot understand Limousin](#), with the exception of the dialect spoken in Corrèze. The reason is that the phonetics, inflections and vocabulary of Limousin are completely different than in Auvergnat.

Auvergnat speakers are [completely lost](#) with the Languedocien speech of Toulouse and Carcassonne. Auvergnat speakers [cannot understand Creusois](#). Auvergnat is [utterly unintelligible](#) to Gascon speakers.

Auvergnat speakers [cannot understand](#) the Provençal spoken in Montpellier, and there is [marginal intelligibility](#) with Nîmes and Sète. The Languedocien influence on these Provençal dialects is what makes them hard to understand for Auvergnat speakers. [People](#) with one parent who spoke South Auvergnat and another who spoke Provençal were not taught Occitan because the dialects were too different, implying that South Auvergnat has poor intelligibility with Provençal.

Auvergnat is closer to French than the rest of Occitan, and it has the strongest Arpitan influences of any Occitan language.

There are two major splits - South Auvergnat or Upper Auvergnat in the south of the region and North Auvergnat or Lower Auvergnat in the north of the region, which are separate languages. The names upper and lower do not correspond with north and south here, which is curious.

South Auvergnat is spoken from Mauriac in the west through Brioude in the center to Crapponne sur Arzon south to the border of Auvergne. It has [difficult intelligibility](#) with the North Auvergnat spoken in Allier and Puy de Dôme. South Auvergnat is still in good shape, with [67% of the residents of Cantal](#) speaking the language. South Auvergnat is quite similar to Sarlat Guyennais and the South Limousin spoken around Brive.

Dialects include Brivadois, Mauriacois, Yssingelais, and Sanfloran.

Brivadois is spoken around Brioude and Sanfloran around Saint Flour. Brivadois cannot understand the North Auvergnat spoken in Allier and Puy de Dome. It is [in between](#) North and South Auvergnat but is best characterized as South Auvergnat.

Mauriacois is spoken in the southwest in Mauriac, but it is very different from Aurillacois. It has some old influences from San Floran and Gevaudan. Yssingelais is spoken in Yssingaux in far southeast Auvergne. It has strong Arpitan and Alpine Provençal [influences](#). Some have classed this as an Alpine Provençal dialect, but this seems uncertain. Intelligibility data is lacking. San Floran is spoken in St. Flour. This is a very influential dialect, having influenced many nearby dialects.

North Auvergnat is a macrolanguage spoken in Allier and Puy de Dome. It is close to the langues d'oil, especially Bourbonnais but is probably not intelligible with them. North Auvergnat is not doing well.

Speakers of Brivadois, a South Auvergnat dialect transitional to North Auvergnat, have a hard time understanding the North Auvergnat of Allier and Puy de Dome, so it is separate from South Auvergnat. North Auvergnat, especially in the east, is possibly [the most divergent lect in Occitan after of Gascon](#) due to very heavy Bourbonnais and Arpitan influence. Some even think it is outside of Occitan proper altogether.

North Auvergnat can be divided into two separate languages - Northwest Auvergnat and Northeast Auvergnat. The differences are so dramatic that they must be separate languages.

Northeast Auvergnat is spoken in the eastern part of the North Auvergnat from Jumeaux and Arlanc north to the west bank of the Allier River near Vichy and Cusset. From Vichy-Cusset to the Loire border, Forez Arpitan was formerly spoken. North of Vichy-Cusset to the Champagne-Ardennes border, langue d'oil Bourbonnais used to be spoken. Northeast Auvergnat has very heavy Arpitan influences that make it so different from Northwest Auvergnat that it must be a

separate language. In fact, Livradois speakers [cannot understand](#) Besse-en-Chandesse speakers.

Livradois is a Northeast Auvergnat dialect [spoken](#) on the broad Lemange Plain in the east-central part of Auvergne bordering on Loire. In the southern part of Livradois around St. Antheme, there are strong Forez Arpitan influences.

Northwest Auvergnat is spoken from about Champes sur Tarentaine to Lempdes north to Pionsat and Gannat. The heavy Arpitan influence on Northeast Auvergnat makes it so different that it must be separate from Northwest Auvergnat. And it is true that Besse-en-Chandesse Northwest Auvergnat speakers [cannot understand](#) Livradois Northeast Auvergnat speakers.

[Alpine Provençal \(Vivaro-Alpine\)](#) is a macrolanguage, part of the Provençal macrolanguage, and is often considered to be a separate branch of Northern Occitan.

An [overview](#) of Alpine Provençal is here. In France, Alpine Provençal is spoken by perhaps over 100,000 speakers, but most of them are middle-aged or elderly.

Maritime and Rhodanian Provençal speakers [cannot understand](#) Vivaroalpine, so it is a separate entity.

Dauphine Provençal (Vivaro-Dauphine) is a separate language within Alpine Provençal. It is spoken in the departments of Ardèche (except the north and the western border areas), Drôme (except the north) and the southernmost parts of Isère.

Dialects include [Ardechois \(Mid Vivarois\)](#), spoken in the center of the Ardeche and Dauphinois or Drômois, spoken in the Drôme River area.

Gerbier de Jonc is an Ardechois dialect spoken in the Ardeche region of that name. It [differs greatly](#) from the north to the south, with words changing from village to village.

[Other dialects](#) are Albenassien, Albonnais, Annonéen, Southeast Ardèchois, Boutierot, Northeast Drômois, Southeast Drômois, Montilien, Privadois, Valentinois, and Vernoux-Doux.

Privadois is spoken in Privas in the Ardeche. Montilien is spoken in Montelimier in the Drome. Albonnais, spoken in the village of Albon in the commune of St. Pierreville in the central Ardeche, was still [widely used](#) in everyday life in the town as of 15 years ago.

In areas east of Haute-Loire in the Southern Auvergnat region, Dauphine Provençal [resembles](#) South Auvergnat. It is apparently not intelligible with Rhodanian or Maritime Provençal.

Gavot Provençal is a divergent Northern Occitan language within Alpine Provençal in France. There are intelligibility problems between this and the Dauphine Provençal spoken in the Drome and the Ardeche such that the others say that Gavot is a [separate language](#).

This language is spoken in an area bounded by Gap - Embrun - St. Paul on the north, Sisteron - Digne - Anot - Nice on the west, Nice to Menton on the south and Menton - Roya Valley - Italian border to St. Paul on the east. Gavot is an [eastern group of Vivaro-Alpine](#) spoken in the French Occitan Alps. Speakers of Maritime and Rhodanian Provençal say they cannot understand Gavot.

Apparently all Gavot dialects, while differing from village to village in vocabulary, morphology, verbal conjugation and phonetics, are [mutually intelligible](#).

Dialects include Molliérois, Embrunais, and Seynois. [Molliérois](#) is a dialect of Gavot spoken north of St. Martin Vesubie and Beauvi near the Italian border. It differs significantly from the dialects of St. Martin

Vesubie and Isola very close by. Embrunais is spoken in Embrun. Embrunais has problematic intelligibility with the Transalpin Provençal spoken in Briançon. Seynois is spoken in the town of Seyne and in the surrounding towns of Auzet Barle, Montclar, Selonnet, and Le Vernet.

Transalpin Provençal is a Northern Occitan language, the Italian group of the eastern section of Alpine Provençal, spoken in the Piedmontese Valleys in the Alps along the northwestern Italian border with France and just over the border with France in the Briançon region. There are about 100,000 speakers in Italy, about 50% of the population in the region. The language is in much worse shape in France, where it is near extinction. It is best seen as a Gavot-Piedmontese transitional language.

It is spoken in 14 Piedmontese valleys in the Alps (in the provinces of Cuneo and Torino) and in one community (Olivetta San Michele) and a few hamlets in the Liguria region (in the province of Imperia).

A lot of parents in this region still pass Transalpin Provençal on to their children, but the language is declining, being replaced with Piedmontese or Italian. It is spoken in the highest valleys only, having been replaced in the lowest valleys first and then the middle valleys. The highest valleys often lack schools, courts, post offices, etc. The people live in homes that often lack heating and bathrooms and sometimes lack electricity.

Of the young people under age 20, 40-50% of them speak the language. There is an increase in the number of cases where two Occitan speaking parents speak Italian only to their children. Of the population of 180,000, about 50,000 are Occitan first language speakers.

In Italy, it is spoken in the upper valleys of Piedmont (Val Maira, Val Varacho, Val d'Esturo, Entraigas, Limoun, Vinai, Pignerol, and Sestriero) by speakers of all ages, but younger people are reportedly shifting to Italian. Nevertheless, there are reports that the number of

speakers of this language has actually [risen](#) in recent years, and it is now recognized as an official language by the state of Italy.

In the [Estura Valley](#), Piedmontese (with heavy Transalpin Provençal influence) is spoken in the lower valley from Demonde up the valley to Aisone, and Transalpin Provençal is spoken from Aisone to the top of the valley. In this area, 100% of the population speaks either Transalpin Provençal or Piedmontese or both. It is only down by Cuneo that you start running into a lot of Italian speakers.

Transalpin Provençal is [not intelligible](#) outside of the region.

Escarton is a dialect of Transalpin Provençal that is spoken in France and Italy near the town of Briançon on the border of France and Italy where the Gavot Provençal, Piedmontese and Savoyard Arpitan languages all come together. All three languages influence this dialect, especially Savoyard, but at base it remains an Occitan dialect. It is spoken in the Cottian Alps.

There are many different dialects included under the Escarton rubric. Briançon dialects include Viaran and Montegenevre. Escarton also includes Queyras, spoken around Abries and Aigilles in France to the southeast. In Italy, it includes Oulx in Oulx, Bardonecchia in Val Susa and Val Chisone in the town of Sestriere in Val Chisone.

Escarton has [difficult intelligibility](#) with the rest of Occitan. It has [better intelligibility](#) with the Transalpin Provençal across the border in Italy than with the Embrunais Gavot of the lower valley in France.

Gardiol is a diaspora Alpine Provençal language spoken in [Guardia Piemontese](#), an Occitan-speaking town in Southern Italy. The town, located in the Cantabria region in Cosenza Province, was established in the 1300's by people from the Waldensian or Vaudois Protestant movements who were fleeing Catholic religious persecution. They were thought to be [heretics](#) and were massacred in the 1300's.

The language is a Vivaroalpenc dialect [formerly spoken](#) in Briançon and in the Varaita and Pellice valleys of France. It is still taught from K-12 in school and has [340 speakers](#). Gardiol is under strong Southern Italian influence. Gardiol is said to be [incomprehensible](#) to French Occitan speakers due to the fact that it has been diverging for over 700 years in isolation in Italy.

There are [more Gardiol speakers](#) in Germany's Württemberg, in the US (especially in North Carolina in the town of Valdese), in the Argentinian town of Pigüé, and in Canada's province of Quebec. Intelligibility of these diaspora lects with the language in Italy is not known.

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