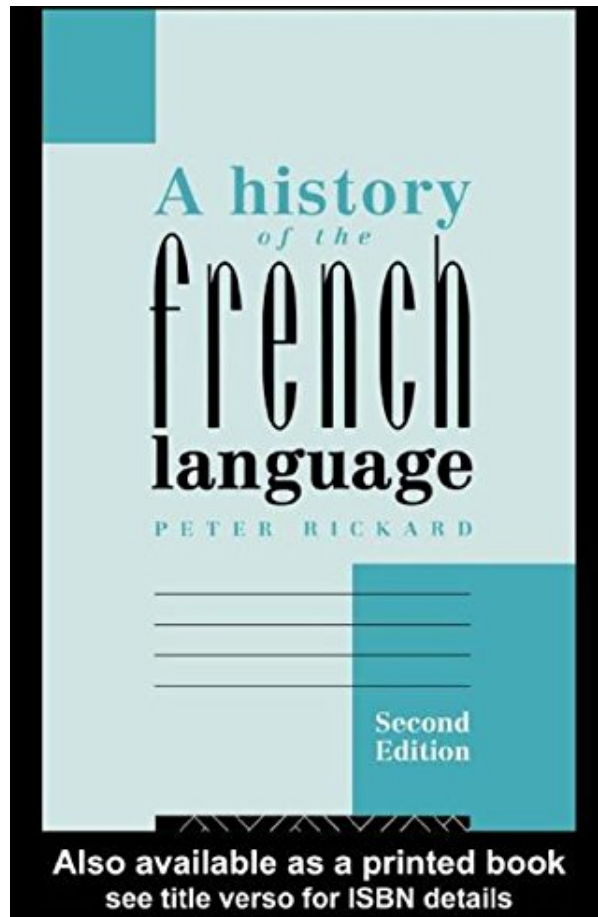
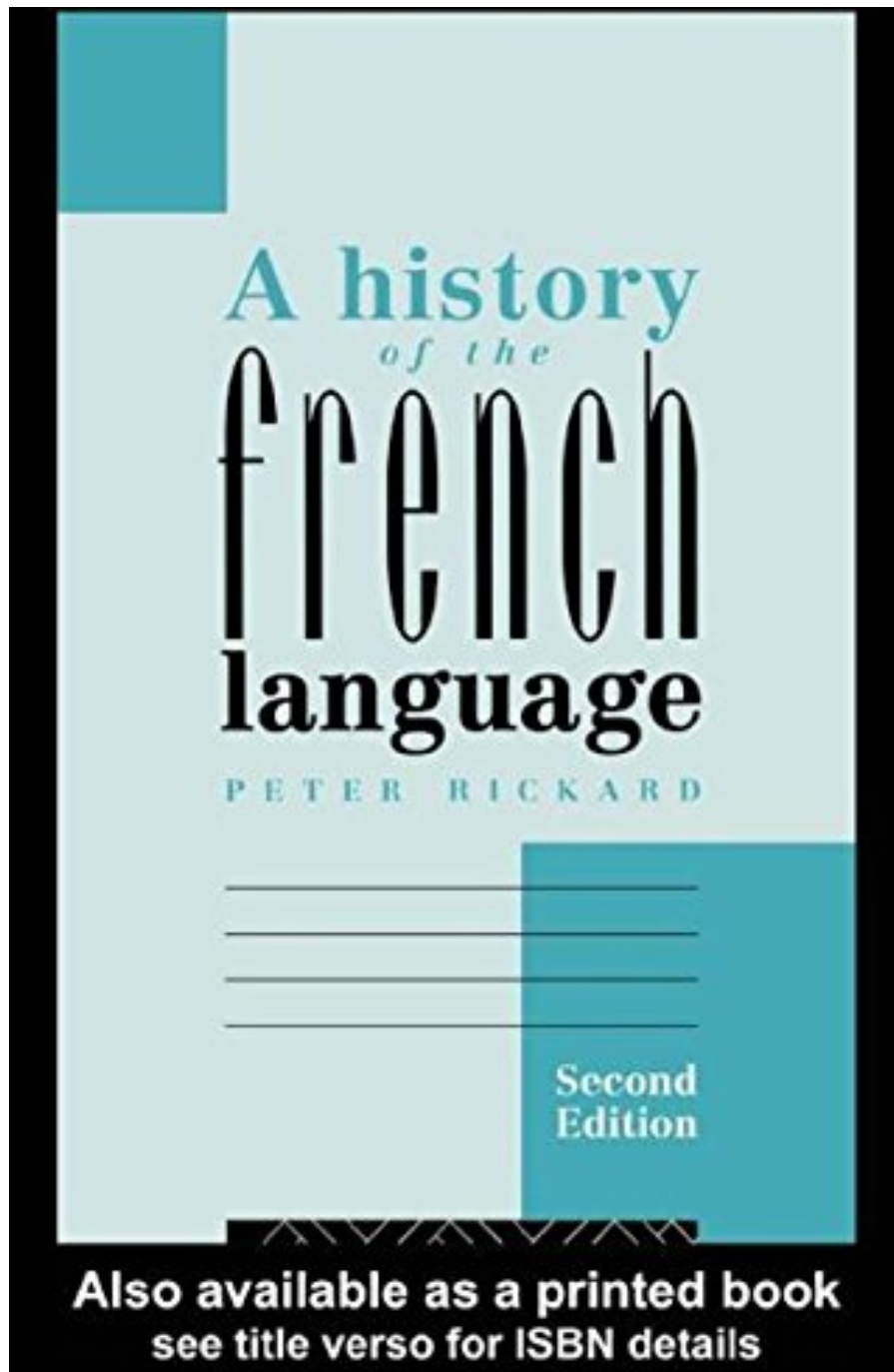


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." . . should be compulsory reading for any serious practitioner of French, either amateur or professional. Not merely will many things become clear for the first time but it will be a very enjoyable experience."

- "Times Educational Supplement

## About the Author

Peter Rickard is at Emmanuel College, Cambridge.

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A very interesting and detailed history for those with some training in linguistics

By Christopher Culver

Peter Rickard's *A HISTORY OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE* was first published in 1974 with a second edition appearing in 1989. Please note that although this Amazon listing describes the second edition, I read the first edition and my review is based on that.

Rickard was Drapers Professor of French at Cambridge and in this 174-page text he brings us from the earliest days when the speech of France was but a collection of vulgar Latin dialects to the modern standard language. Along the way, he shows how sound change spurred morphological change, how literary production down through time reflects the evolution of the language, and what polemics authorities engaged in on language standardization.

I should mention that this is not a book for those with some French who want to learn how to read earlier texts. The reader of *A HISTORY OF FRENCH* ideally has some training in Latin and in basic linguistics

(phonology and morphology). I'd recommend reading W. Sidney Allen's *Vox Latina* before Rickard's history, in order to have a better understanding of the pronunciation of late Latin.

My only real complaint about Rickard's history is that discussion of diaspora French is missing. Once the various dialects of France have formed a standard language, his focus rests entirely on that standard language and its registers in France. African French, which I find quite fascinating, is in no way covered. Neither is Quebec French, which is simply inexplicable.

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A social and linguistic history of the French language; inclusive if rather heavy going. Unfortunately, it is now getting rather dated -- first published 1974, revised in 1989. Francophones, of course, have a wide choice, but there are also some newer books out in English. I like Lodge's "French: from dialect to standard" better; it is more interesting and better written.

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