A textbook teaching a course of studies in Cajun French — the first such book of its kind, according to the author — is nearly complete and is just about ready for publication here.

The report is being carried out in "its natural environment, the classroom," says James D. Faulk, the book's author.

Researched and written by Faulk, a French instructor at two Crowley schools, the text is the first of a two volume set designed to teach conversational Cajun French, as it is spoken by natives of southwest and south central Louisiana, in a systematic organized manner.

Instructing is arranged according to thematic units such as, the home, the city, food and the family. Basically, each unit introduces a new vocabulary of Cajun words and idiomatic expressions relating to the lesson topic. Also, each chapter uses the vocabulary to teach grammar rules, applying them in exercises and a unit conversation.

Forty-one phonetic symbols innovated by Faulk by using familiar English sounds teach pronunciation. Accompanying each printed lessons is a recorded version on cassette tape. Faulk expected to have about 30 lessons in each text.

The idea for such a course was prompted by a student's request to converse in French with a relative, his grandmother.

"At that point," says Faulk, "I knew that all my efforts were not helping him meet his immediate needs. I knew he had to learn Cajun French and thus I realized the need for a course in Cajun French."

All vocabulary and phrases have been gleaned from native French speakers in Cameron, Acadia, Vermilion, Lafayette, St. Martin and Iberia parishes.

"The book value is both practical and cultural," says Faulk, who has instructed in both college and high school classrooms for 25 years.

"The purpose of teaching a foreign language is to have students understand and to converse with native speakers. The majority of people in this area speak Cajun French. If a student intends to work and live in south Louisiana, then Cajun French meets his immediate need better."

Faulk emphasized his purpose is not to replace, decry, or compete with the teaching of standard French. There is a need for standard French in the classroom but he sees Cajun French as an alternative for students. Faulk feels there is a place for both types of French in the language curriculum.

Faulk also pointed out that many Cajuns customs are known by Cajun French terms and a course in Cajun French serves as a cultural reinforcement.