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Laura Cohen

The French Identity Crisis: Fending Off the Franglais Invasion

France is *the French language – Fernand Braudel*

In a nation that derives so much of its identity from a longstanding cultural heritage, rather than from an economic or political tradition, the many voices of government officials and journalists claiming to speak for the French people insist that France finds itself facing an identity crisis. Since the 1789 Revolution, French has not only been the official state language, but has acted as an indicator of the strength of the unified republican nation. When asked to describe the importance of the French language to its people, former Minister of Culture Jacques Toubon described it as "their primary capital, the symbol of their dignity, the passageway to integration,...a common heritage, part of the French dream" (Pells 270). In recent decades, France has been unable to avoid the ever-expanding reach of globalization, and perhaps even more threatening, the grasp of Americanization. Consequently, English has begun to permeate seemingly every aspect of French society, whether through "Franglais" or the onslaught of advertising featuring English words and music. Against such cultural intrusion, France's first line of defense is its language policy. Popularized in 1954 by the literary critic and philosopher René Etiemble, Franglais refers to the occurrence of recognizable Anglicisms or Americanisms in the French language (Thody 1). Faced with both the external threat of English and its effects on the content of the French language, and the internal competition of immigrant and regional languages, most recently Arabic, the French government has put protecting the purity of the French language high on its agenda (Ager, *Identity* 6). Through examining the surprisingly long

history of language policy in France and specifying the role of English in both France and the EU today, the reality of France's situation becomes clearer. As a result, it is possible to evaluate the success of the current protectionist program, as well as to identify different strategies that may be more effective in preserving French cultural identity.

Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?

In a subsequent quote by Jacques Toubon, he insists that "Anglo-Saxon countries, far from contenting themselves by passively benefiting from the situation of English...are employing considerable efforts...to conquer new territory for their language," exemplifying the concern repeated by French headlines and government officials that the French language, and consequently the French nation, is under the attack of cultural imperialism (Grigg 373). Before delving into the history of French language policy, then, it is vital to recognize how the French language has become so deeply rooted in the cultural identity of the country. This will reveal why an imposing foreign language can be seen as a personal attack on the national cultural community. In a summary of recent literature on identity, Max Haller and Regina Ressler identified three components of national identity:

1) a self-image, a consciousness of the specific characteristics of one's own nation, its strengths and weaknesses compared to others (the cognitive component);
2) a certain kind of love for and attachment to the nation, including national pride and shame (...emotional components);
3) the readiness to act on behalf of the nation and to support political measures to strengthen and protect the nation (the action component) (821).

The French language can be linked to each of these components, whether by cognitively ranking French as a language superior to those of other nations, or emotionally identifying with French because it was intrinsic in defining the republic during the French Revolution. In particular, language functions as a strong symbol of national identity because it was viewed as a means of unifying the French people at a time when the nation and nationalism were being defined.

As Elie Kedourie, an important contributor to the contemporary discussion on national identity, defined in his 1960 work *Nationalism* that "nationalism is a doctrine invented in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century" and "nations are known by certain characteristics which can be ascertained" (Joseph 96). Most historians are quick to point to the French Revolution of 1789 as a major example of the emergence of a national identity and as a result, the force that is nationalism. During this period, "large numbers of the French came to draw the common modern equation between the legal category of nationality and the cultural fact of language" (Bell 1405). Efforts by the leaders of the revolutionary government to unite all people of the French republic not only aimed to simplify the logistics of unifying the whole nation, but to tie even the peasants to a common, civilized tradition they would respect and defend (1407).

As a result, along with the ideals of *liberté, égalité, et fraternité,* immortalized in the motto of France, the modern French language also became inextricably linked with the idea of the nation. Soon after being identified as a successful element in the creation of a unified French nation, this association between state and language was reinforced in the ideologies of other European nations. This new relationship was exemplified by Johann Gottlieb Fichte, whom in an address to the German nation in 1806 asserted that "the first, original, and truly natural boundaries of states are beyond doubt their internal boundaries. Those who speak the same

language are joined to each other by a multitude of invisible bonds" (Joseph 110). This relationship between language and nation has continued to hold true centuries later in Europe. A survey of 21 European countries on the topic "National Identity" in 2003 determined that "'*to be able to speak the language'* is considered as the most important among all" other items considered in the formation of the "cultural concept of nation," including respecting the laws and institutions of a country, sharing national ancestors, being born in a country, and having resided there a long time (Haller and Ressler 834-835). From the results of the survey, it is concluded that shared cultural components, particularly language, "are basic for a positive attitude toward an active participation in the political community. Therefore, they are also essential for national identity" (844).

The foundations of recent anxieties regarding cultural identity

Once established, the undeniable relationship between a national language and identity was left unquestioned for the most part in France, with the only resistance surfacing in regards to minority languages. It is no coincidence that this period of ideological tranquility coincides with an era in which France gained renown as an influential world power, and as a result there was no need to reevaluate the solidity of the nation's foundations. Instead, more concrete indicators of France's strength during the 19th and early 20th century included its economic and political prowess, especially seen through the scope of the expansive French colonial empire. While laws attempting to regulate language started to appear in the second half of the 20th century, it was not until 1992 that France made an effort to reassert the necessity of the French language in maintaining a purely French national identity. With a constitutional revision in 1992 stating

explicitly that “la langue de la République est le français” France definitively marked a new era in which those most vocally speaking on the behalf of the French people, which is to say primarily the government, press, and intellectuals, expressed concerns that the linguistic root of the national cultural identity was at risk of being weakened or undermined (Szulmajster-Celnikier 52).

What was it about the 20th century that so concerned French cultural purists? The menace to French cultural identity came both from across the Atlantic and from cultural deviations within France. During the 20th century, English was rapidly gaining prestige as a global language, and along with the language came the full force of American culture, both of which France interpreted as threats to French cultural identity. The foundation of France's aversion towards, and even fear of outside cultures stems from the belief that the French culture is a “high culture”, more advanced and developed than that of other nations (Kuisel, “Seducing the French” 119, 127). When other nations, specifically the United States, introduce or force aspects of their cultures upon French society, it is seen as a conflict between “high culture” and “low culture”. The French fear that the infiltration of “low culture” will taint and possibly replace the French national culture that has so long been a major factor in defining their identity (17). This cultural superiority complex is vital to modern French identity as they struggle to remain a leader in other elements of national prestige. While France may struggle to compete politically and economically with other nations, the French continue to insist on this distinction that French culture functions as a valued public service instead of the mere commodified entertainment that America produces. The French language functions in the same way, as it is viewed as a cultivated and perfected language that the French have created through years of standardization.

Since the French have a history of rejecting outside elements that do not coincide with traditional French culture, it is no surprise that protectionist language laws and efforts to expressly bind French to the nation and national identity surfaced along with anti-American sentiment.

The first wave of rampant anti-Americanism occurred during the post-World War Two era. One of the main American values being exported at this time was consumerism, to which the French put up great resistance. American labor techniques and work ethic allowed for mass amounts of products and culture to be shipped out to the rest of the world as Europe was rebuilding under the Marshall Plan. The shiny new cars and appliances flooding the Western European market were more than just foreign goods coming in; these objects instead meant changes in the French lifestyle, and this new lifestyle was being promoted in English (Pells 197-198). France was thus dealing with both a constant stream of American products and values coming in, as well as the sting of partially relying on the United States to rebuild itself. It would prove far easier eventually to target the conduit of these values and ideals--the English language--than to refuse the opportunity to reconstruct the country.

The fear and anger that coincided with the implementation of the Marshall Plan only increased as more American mass culture flooded France towards the end of the 20th century, but this time the villain was not financial reliance on America while Europe was weakened; globalization was the new world force that made France anxious. In this new era of anti-Americanism, France had the same concerns regarding loss of economic and political autonomy, but this time these concerns surfaced because of increasingly globalized markets, increased corporate power, rampant neo-liberalism, and the loss of some national sovereignty through association with the European Union, all of which frequently relied on English. Globalization,

which often refers to “the increasing speed, ease, and extent with which capital, goods, services, technologies, people, cultures, information, and ideas now cross borders” (Gordon and Meunier 7), is a largely abstract concept. By naming America and American culture as the leader of globalization, France found a concrete enemy. In 2007, a poll showed that while 47% of Europeans found globalization to be more of a threat than an opportunity, an overwhelming 71% of French people specifically held the same opinion (Meunier 215).

In addition to these outside forces, in recent decades France has been battling with constant immigration, which is seen as internal threat to their cultural identity. The influx of immigrants and the variety of cultures they subsequently introduce into French culture are completely contrary to what President Chirac described in his article, “Une Même Patrie culturelle,” as the necessity of “a commitment to a single national culture, administered by the state” (Ingram 803). This view is not far off from the growing xenophobia in France, exemplified by the growing support for the Front National and its belief that immigrant cultures are incompatible with the French national identity (Ager, *Identity* 83). As globalization can also be deemed a facilitator of this movement of people, any unwelcome feelings that the French have towards immigrants' incoming, foreign culture can easily be projected onto a bigger, easier target: America, and the English language, which introduces every imposed American idea and encourages the movement of people. Globalization, then, has essentially been re-framed in the French intellectual mind as Americanization, and the language of globalization as English. It is no wonder then that in 2002, polls recorded that an overwhelming 92% of French people described the United States as “domineering”, citing “'seizing control of other countries,' 'acting as world policemen,' 'imposing their life-style,' 'American imperialism,' or 'economic

hegemony'" as explanations for this sentiment (Kuisel, "What do the French" 95). As the French government struggles to reassert its dominance on the global playing field, as well as assure the cultural integrity of the French language at home, it has recently designated protectionist language policies as its best defense.

The Evolution of French Linguistic Protectionism

The attempts of the French government to preserve the purity of the French language is actually contrary to the many influences and transformations through which French has gone to reach its modern, recognizable form. Prior to the fifth century A.D., Gaulish was spoken in France, which soon was replaced by Latin. The Latin spoken in France began to evolve, and by the eighth century, the language had transformed to the point where it was characterized as distinguishable from Latin, the first form of old French. As this old French slowly developed into its modern incarnation, it was subject to several outside influences. In addition to Latin, the other main influences were English, from the time period of the Norman Conquest, as well as Italian, which played an especially notable role in the formation of French during the sixteenth and seventeenth century.

From this time on, the French language became more strictly organized: vocabulary and grammar were universally defined, eventually resembling modern French. Throughout this transformation, regional languages, such as Breton and Occitan, continued to exist predominantly independently until the Revolution, when French would take more and more precedence in public dealings and regional languages would be stigmatized as uncivilized and thus unnecessary (Grigg 369). Throughout these early centuries, French had manifested as a

unique language, and gradually began to gain a sense of prestige over all other surrounding languages through its use in the social circles of the Court and the aristocracy, soon enough serving as "la langue du roi" (Szulmajster-Celnikier 39).

While Anglo-Saxon words were influencing the French language during this linguistic evolution, French words had nearly an equal influence on the development of English until the nineteenth century. According to a 1975 study by Karl Gebhardt, "From 1550 to 1950, French borrowed 600 words from English, while English had borrowed 1914 from French up to 1854" (Ager, *Identity* 107). Only with the Industrial Revolution was this reciprocity disturbed, since much of the emerging industrial language had its origins in English, just as technological vocabulary does today (Grigg 369). French language policy originated far before the Industrial Revolution made English the biggest linguistic threat, however. While a royal decree from 1490 recognized the clear distinction between French and regional languages, the first major policies regarding French can be traced back to the 1530s, with a decree in 1535 advocating French as a replacement for Latin in judicial documents (Safran, "Politics and language" 41). The more authoritative ordinance of Villers-Cotterêts in 1539 designated French as the official language for administrative and judicial texts, and functions as the symbolic inauguration of the unified linguistic strategy promoted by the government, as it is still valid today (Szulmajster-Celnikier 39).

While not an official movement by the government, the works of La Pléiade complemented these initial efforts during the 16th century to refine and promote a French language that was worthy of the French nation. A group of French writers and poets, La Pléiade strove to elevate the French language to the same level of prestige as classical languages in the

realm of literature ("La Pléiade"). However, just as in the emergence of the French language, the members supported the integration of elements from other languages. Joachim du Bellay's 1549 document *Défense et illustration de la langue françoise* "advocated the enrichment of the French language by discreet imitation and borrowing from the language and literary forms of the classics and the works of the Italian Renaissance" ("La Pléiade"). Du Bellay also supported drawing on provincial and archaic dialects of French, as well as creating new words to contribute to the potential richness of the French vernacular ("La Pléiade").

The creation of the Académie Française in 1635 was the next considerable step towards strengthening and structuring the French language. Established by Cardinal Richelieu "with the mandate to 'set down certain rules for our language, making it pure, eloquent and capable of dealing with the arts and sciences'," the Académie was the first organization that attempted to regulate French (Grigg 371). Publishing its first dictionary in 1694, the Académie systematically identified the proper pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar for the French language (Szulmajster-Celnikier 40). Not just an attempt to create a standard language to unify all corners of France, the order and uniformity specified by the Académie "est perçu comme un 'ordre naturel', à l'image de l'ordre monarchique immuable," mirroring the efforts of the absolute monarchy to centralize and regulate the French people (41). The Académie still holds its weekly meetings today, but instead of focusing on influencing and directing the path of French, it now merely makes recommendations concerning recent trends in the language as it has no legally binding power to enforce language guidelines. Its main contributions are granting literary and language awards and continuing to publish an often-revised dictionary of official terms to be used in French (Ager, *Identity* 149-50). In late 2011, the Académie created a new section of its

website called “Dire, Ne pas dire” that lists undesirable anglicisms, examples of improper French usage, and grammatical and lexical suggestions to remedy these transgressions (Samuel 1).

After establishing French as supreme within the nation itself, the language began to spread outwards into the rest of Europe. Particularly through the outlet of military expansion, France became more prominent in communication between European powers during the 17th and 18th centuries. Destroying Latin as the previous language for intra-European dialogue, in 1714 France and Charles VI as the Holy Roman Emperor signed the Treaty of Rastatt, written in French, to end conflicts between France and Austria. This solidified French as the “langue diplomatique de l'Europe” for the next few centuries (Szulmajster-Celnikier 41). However, Latin was no longer the language competing with French for international prestige and prevalence. When France and England signed the Treaty of Paris in 1763, France not only ceded its territory in Canada to England, but acknowledged that as the English empire expanded, English had the potential to eventually dethrone French as the primary international language (42).

During the Revolution of 1789, the French language became the central instrument in evoking a unified citizenry to build a new national identity for the republic. This effort was designed to eliminate any internal enemies or irregularities that might have distracted from a centralized, unified nation, such as the provincial languages, with the rationalization that “l'ignorance de la langue d'Etat peut être prétexte à ignorer la loi” (Szulmajster-Celnikier 43). In July of 1794 a decree was issued stating that “no public act, no matter of what part of the territory of the Republic, may be written in any language other than French” (qtd. in Safran, “Politics and language” 42). This law was punishable by imprisonment for up to six months and potential dismissal from office for public officials. Several subsequent decrees later in 1794 and

through the 1820s reinforced this policy, eventually establishing that “French...is the only official language” and as such, “the patois of the different regions in France are forbidden” (qtd. in Safran, “Politics and language” 42).

Other than these decrees, no significant effort was made to further emphasize the official standing of French in the republic until partway through the 20th century. Instead, the French language maintained its esteemed presence within and outside of France through the French-speaking soldiers driving the military conquests of Napoleon in the 19th century, and the Napoleonic politic of centralization which insisted upon the French language as the binding element between all French people (Szulmajster-Celnikier 44). However, there were once again growing concerns that France was culturally in competition with England and Germany, due to England's reign as the primary global power during the Victorian era, Germany's acquisition of the Alsace-Lorraine territory in 1870, and the expanses of colonial territories held by other European countries. To quell any rising anxieties about the international role of France, the only organized effort made was to create the “Alliance française pour la propagation de la langue française dans les colonies et à l'étranger” in 1883 (45).

Despite the efforts by the government to unify French citizens under the same language, a report in 1863 estimated that over 10% of elementary school children from 37,000 communities did not speak French, and nearly half were not able to write in French. With the creation of a centralized republican education system under the Jules Ferry laws in the 1880s, regional languages were further de-legitimized, as French became the only language recognized and taught in the schools. It would not be until the Deixonne law in 1951 that certain regional languages were allowed to be taught in schools for one hour a week, if elected by students,

though the initiative was poorly funded and barely enforced, and thus did little to change the linguistic structure of the education system (Safran, “Language, Ideology” 400).

Until the late twentieth century, French language policy revolved around eradicating the threat of regional languages to French, and with the exception of a minor movement against the Italian influence in the late sixteenth century, foreign languages were not a considerable factor in determining the treatment of language in France. In fact, French was held in high esteem in the international community during the 1960s and 1970s. French was “an official language of the United Nations...; a major 'working language' of the European Community and the Council of Europe; one of the official languages of the Helsinki Conference on European Security and Cooperation; and the official language in most of France's former colonies in Africa” (Safran, “Politics and language” 44). Additionally, French has been one of the official languages of the Olympics ever since Frenchman Pierre de Coubertin founded the modern games (Sage). However, whereas French had once been the language of republicanism and enlightened thinking, the world was seeing a rise in English, the language of democracy and freedom in the post-colonial, wildly capitalist era.

A New Era of Limiting Language: The Bas-Lauriol and Toubon Laws

In 1975, the French government felt that the influence of English on the French language was reaching worrisome levels, and the Bas-Lauriol law was unanimously passed by the Chambre des Députés. The Bas-Lauriol law aimed to protect the purity of the French language, stipulating that “French must be used when describing, offering or presenting goods or services for sale, in describing their use, defining their guarantee, in any advertising, written or oral, as in

bills and receipts" (Thody 10-11). Failure to comply with the law could result in a fine, but due to the lack of an organized system for recognizing and investigating transgressions, the number of prosecutions was minimal. Only two violations were successfully dealt with through court cases: in 1985, Trans World Airlines was found in to be violation after only using English on its boarding passes; and in 1992, a French producer of surfboards was fined for supplying instructions only in English (Grigg 372).

The Bas-Lauriol law proved largely ineffective, and France grew increasingly wary of the growing influence of English. Almost as a sign of defiance against the sense of diminished national identity that came with the acceptance of the Maastricht Treaty and membership in the European Union, in 1992 France added a new clause to its Constitution, explicitly stating that "The language of the Republic is French" (Ager, *Language Policy* 43). It was not until the Toubon Law in 1994, though, that French language policy took an especially defensive turn. Named for Jacques Toubon, the Minister for Culture and Francophonie, the Toubon Law was a fortified version of the unproductive Bas-Lauriol law. Toubon explained the reasoning behind the improved law as the following: French "should not be 'relegated to secondary uses' in the face of English" and "that economic progress, social integration and the unity of Francophone countries outside France depended on defence of the symbolic role of French as 'language of democracy and freedom'." (Ager, *Identity* 8)

The new law mandated the use of French in the workplace, in situations affecting consumers, and in most public spaces. Five domains required the use of French: consumer protection, employment, education, audio-visual communication, and civil servants or those working in the public sphere (Ager *Language Policy* 44). Specific situations in which French

was obligatory included work-related documents, all conferences and academic gatherings in France unless a French translation was available, and educational institutions, disregarding exemptions. Private persons found in violation of the law could be fined from 3,000 to 10,000 francs, and corporations could be fined from 15,000 to 50,000 francs. Actions could be brought against violators of the law by the state through the Ministère Public, the Direction Générale de la Concurrence, de la Consommation et de la Répression des Fraudes (DGCCRF), or by associations. Now, over 200 associations exist to defend the French language, and their roles vary from promoting awareness of language policy laws to independently investigating the adherence to such laws (Landick 134-5).

In conjunction with the Toubon Law, in 1994 the Ministry of Culture also released the *Dictionnaire des Termes Officiels*, a list of more than 2,500 outlawed Anglicisms (Grigg 374). The Toubon law, as well as the additional measures to make the law more enforceable and daunting reflected the rampant anti-Americanism, and thus anti-English language sentiments that were surfacing, particularly among the intellectuals, journalists, and government officials. The late twentieth century saw France struggling to hold onto its traditions and independent identity in the face of globalization: France relinquished further sovereignty to the European Union, was fighting to keep out the flood of American music and film, as evidenced by the French insistence on retaining audio-visual product quotas at the 1993 General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade, and struggled to accept and integrate the Internet into French society (Grigg 372). While it was nearly impossible to police the acceptance of foreign culture by French citizens, the government was at least able to maintain some power over threats to French identity through its language legislation.

The strict Toubon law received mixed responses from the French. While some of the press glorified the policy as a necessary instrument to combat American cultural imperialism and hegemony, others found the law to be outdated and an exaggeration of the severity of English in French society. The public was also ambivalent: a poll showed that 61% of French citizens approved of the government acting against the influx of English, but the intensity of the law quickly changed the mind of many, notably the entrepreneurs, advertisers, etc., that would be most hurt by the policy (Grigg 373). These concerns were somewhat resolved when, later in 1994, the Conseil Constitutionnel declared the Toubon law unconstitutional, claiming that the law was in violation of "'the fundamental liberty of thought and expression guaranteed by the constitution' and...could not 'oblige private citizens, on pain of punishment, to use certain words or expressions defined by the constitution'" (Grigg 374). Ironically enough, the document compromised by the law was the 1789 *Declaration of the Rights of Man*, an invention of the same Revolution which started promoting French as the sole language of the national identity.

The Toubon law was amended, and essentially reduced to what was a reiteration of the 1975 Bas-Lauriol law, with the exception of a few key provisions: French is obligatory in advertising and product description and directions, in contracts, in public announcements, and in public service or official communications. Foreign terms are only permitted if no suggested French equivalent exists, or if a French translation is clearly provided (Safran, "Politics and language" 53). Though the Toubon law is not scrupulously enforced, the number of statements of offense issued between 1994 and 1997 increased from 107 to 390, and numerous cases have been brought to court either by the state, associations or both. These cases are often over considerably minor offenses, and serve as an example more than anything else. Several of the cases required

the product in question to add a French translation, but not remove the foreign language. Furthermore, only 67.8% of cases regarding the obligatory use of French have involved English, so the law is not strictly focused on prosecuting English violations (Landick 131).

However, a lawsuit in December 1996 made both French and US headlines as a test case for the Toubon Law, particularly examining how it could function in a society becoming more and more reliant on the Internet. Two French language defense associations, Défense de la langue française and Avenir de la langue française, brought a suit against the French branch of the Georgia Institute of Technology, Georgia Tech Lorraine, a campus of 60 students located in eastern France in Metz (Tattersall 10; Chaddock 2). All instruction at Georgia Tech Lorraine was conducted in English by professors from the United States, and consequently all of the descriptions on its French website were in English, which was claimed to be a violation of the Toubon Law. If the university were to lose the case, they would face fines of $5,000 for each time someone visited the site while it remained in English without a French translation or equivalent (Chaddock 2). Columnist François Hubert insisted that "the Website should be in French. It's a matter of respect for the French language," and Marie-Hélène Dumestre of the French Ministry of Culture reiterated the opinion that "the Toubon Law covers all advertising of goods or services in France. There is no reason why the Internet should escape" (2-3). The test case never did reach completion, though, as the lawsuit was dismissed on a legal technicality, and the defense groups dropped the matter. Without having this case as precedent for future action against the countless French companies conducting their business in English online, or for any Internet-related conflicts that may arise, the evolution of French protectionist language policy hit a wall, unable to properly adapt to the new technologies that transmitted unwanted

foreign language and culture into France.

Realities and challenges of the current linguistic strategy

Despite the intentions of the Toubon law and language defense associations, the effectiveness of French language policy in recent years is questionable at best. France struggles to curb the influence of English on French not only because enforcement of linguistic restrictions is difficult, but also because language is constantly evolving. It would be impossible to entirely eradicate all English influence on French because all incoming English words do not function the same way in French; some words, such as "sandwich" and "weekend", are directly implanted into French, resulting in "le sandwich" and "le week-end". Other Anglicisms may be adapted to a French spelling, inspire a translation following either English or French syntax, or not adhere to the French vocabulary at all.

The highest density of English is seen in specific lexical spheres, just as it occurred during the Industrial Revolution. The areas most overrun with English in France today are sports, technology, advertising, and the media, particularly the radio and film industries due to the large concentration of American music and movies. Even after the Toubon Law was put into effect, in 1996 only 48% of music played on the radio in 1996 had French origins (Gordon and Meunier 49). Additionally, in 1998, the market for American audiovisual goods in the European Union, "including movie ticket sales, videocassette rentals, and television rights," was a massive $7.4 billion, compared to the reverse US market for the same European goods, totaling only $706 million (49). In the past few years, access to English-language music, movies, and television has only increased due to the Internet. The French government has offered alternatives to common

English-inspired vocabulary in the technology and advertising sectors, but because the innovations in these industries continue to come from overseas, the English terms which name advancements are difficult to replace, whether because of frequency of use in the industry, ease of global communication and standardization, or failure to find a concise French equivalent (Grigg 377-8).

This incompatibility is especially apparent in the realm of academia. There has been a noticeable increase in the number of scientists writing about and presenting their findings in English, even at events in France, so they can participate at international conferences and communicate better with others in their fields. Additionally, "in the spring of 1989, the *Institut Pasteur* decided to publish its *Annales* in English," another attempt at facilitating global academic partnership that was instead labeled as "cultural treason" (Safran , "Politics and language" 48). Due to official pressure, in 1992 the Institut started publishing a French edition alongside the English (Grigg 381). Before it was overruled in July 1994, a clause of the Toubon Law stipulated that "funding would be withheld if entire scientific papers were published in English" (381). Not only did these clashes between the scientific community and the government strategy threaten the ability of France to successfully communicate with other countries for the benefit of academia and science, they also would have hurt France in the name of linguistic purity, piling on additional costs to accommodate interpreters at conferences and putting French scientists at risk of falling behind new advancements being made in the English-speaking world (381).

Apart from technological or professional registers, many of the American words that have worked their way into French are supported and spread by the youth population. By the mid-

1990s, 70% of young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 in Western Europe spoke English, compared to 40% of those older than 25, and a mere 20% of those over the age of 55 (Pells 239). The American mass culture that French intellectuals and older generations tend to deplore is as popular as ever with the younger generation, and consequently the vocabulary that comes with rap music, fast-food, and American television has made the youth population more fluent in American slang and idioms. While the technological and industrial English language terms make the French nervous because they are reminded of their dwindling global and economic power and capacity, the American pop culture terms represent the cultural imperialism that threatens national identity. Since professional lexicon has its own proper sphere to contain it, the quickly spreading slang and everyday words from American media and culture are seen as possibly the greater threat.

Particularly in regards to the power of the youth population to direct cultural preferences, the Internet is the largest example of how the current French protectionist strategy is falling short of its goals. The Internet challenges the French agenda to keep out English and promote French in two ways. Firstly, English overwhelmingly dominates the internet; in early 2012, reports showed that only 4.1% of websites had French content, lagging behind English at 56.1%, as well as German, Japanese, Russian, Spanish, and Chinese (W3techs). This is not surprising, considering France was late to accept the Internet. Throughout the 1980s, the government supported the implementation of France Telecom's Minitel system, which was useful for booking travel tickets or searching phone directories but little else, in lieu of hooking up the country to internet access. As a result, in 1998 “only a fifth of French households had a computer, compared with two-fifths in America; and only 2% of households were connected to the Internet” (Le

Cyber Challenge). While a 2001 survey indicated that 62% of French respondents preferred to visit websites in French, there is a lack of French content available because the country lagged so far behind in turning to the Internet as the technology of the future, so users often have nowhere to turn but to English-language sources (Bagola 104).

An additional reason behind the tension between the prevalence of the Internet and the French policy for linguist purity is the inherent unregulated nature of the Internet. Unlike the Minitel, whose content was easily manageable, the Internet "does not lend itself to the sort of cultural policing that the French have used in the past" (Le Cyber Challenge). The French government has little to no means of controlling what online content their citizens use, unless it chooses the extreme measure of blocking or limiting nationwide access to the Internet. As evidenced by the attempted case against Georgia Tech, language defense associations and policymakers alike are still unsure of how to approach the problem the internet poses; Marceau Dechamps, a spokesman for one of the associations that brought on the lawsuit, insisted that the time had come "to regulate the internet. There can be no 'outlaw' space," and language purists refuse to admit defeat against the pluralist technology (Chaddock 2).

A future in French or Franglais?

The present and generally ineffective language policy the French government has enacted consists of three areas of focus: " 1. promoting la francophonie – the shoring up and expansion of the international position of the French language; 2. fostering the proper use of French grammar and orthography; 3. protecting the language against foreign "impurities"" (Safran, "Politics and language" 46). Though funds went towards financing the Alliance Française and promoting the

use of French in former colonies and Canada, especially through literary production, there has been no surge in interest in the French language. The percentage of European Commission documents written in French dropped from 40% in 1997 to 11% in 2009 (Samuel). Furthermore, English has replaced French as "the first foreign language taught in German schools and spoken by the elites of Eastern European countries," and after a 1990 law requiring all Spanish schoolchildren to be taught a foreign language, 98% choose English (Safran, "Politics and language" 47; Johnson).

Thus far unsuccessful in maintaining the role of French on the national and international level, let alone increasing it, to best achieve this goal of language policy it would be wise for France to turn to one of its perceived enemies: the Internet. A speech by the French Minister for Culture on May 2nd, 1996 entitled "*Francophonie* and the challenge of new technology" outlined the importance of diffusing the French language and culture through the Internet, instead of working against it. His speech stressed the importance of "removing any technological obstacles which may impede the presence and successful diffusion of the French language on the [Internet]," the need "that the French contents of the Internet should express the richness and originality of the francophonic culture in order to avoid economic and cultural marginalisation of further generations of French speakers," and that this development may be further aided if "the French language [possesses] all the words and expressions to express new concepts in the domain of science and technology" (Tattersall 7). As the number of French Internet users grows, it is vital that Francophone communities seize this opportunity to communicate with each other, as well as leave their own mark on the online network in the French language.

The second prong of the French language policy approach is by no means a new goal of

the French government. Ever since Joachim Du Bellay's 1549 work *Défense et illustration de la langue française* and the creation of the Académie Française, there have been calls for the standardization and purification of the French language (Joseph 107). Today, however, the focus is no longer on defining proper grammar, but suggesting alternatives to English or English-inspired words that have permeated the conversations of French people. The Académie has had some success in promoting French equivalents for English words, particularly with "*logiciel* (software), *matériel* (hardware), *ordinateur* (computer, although the abbreviation *p.c.* remains), and *baladeur* (walkman), all of which have become widely used, largely ousting the original anglicisms" (Grigg 371). When addressing other English terms that have been directly implanted into French, it is important for the government to recognize that language is constantly evolving. In order to be successful in curbing the use of some anglicisms, a useful tactic is to survey the opinions and trends of the French people, instead of merely publishing official lexical suggestions through the Académie. One promising attempt at this is through the recently launched website "wikilf.culture.fr", which asks French-speakers to offer equivalents for English words, and even features polls to survey opinions (Samuel). While this collaborative effort still does not guarantee the widespread use of replacement French terms, it is a more interactive option, and thus more likely to encourage French-speakers to participate in promoting their own language against English.

The third element of the French language policy, "protecting the language against foreign 'impurities'," is the main focus of French policymakers, as evidenced by the major laws of recent decades (Safran, "Politics and language" 46). Though the Toubon Law looms over the heads of all businesses and organizations in France, it has yet to result in significant change in how

English is viewed in the global community. This defensive approach has proven ineffective, and as it is unlikely that those speaking on behalf of France will suddenly drop their concerns against preserving French cultural identity, new approaches should be evaluated. One possibility would be to accept a pluralistic culture, as seen in Québec. As stated in the introduction to the Action Plan for Official languages, "the use of two languages in the public domain is rooted in [Québécois] culture. It is one of the fundamental values that strengthen the attributes that define us, such as openness and respect" (Conrick 314). Québec is able to function as a bilingual community due to its historical background and recognition that both French and English play a vital role in its cultural heritage. This attitude completely conflicts with the basis of French national identity, and thus accepting English as a linguistic equal to French would not be a viable option for future French policy. An inescapable example of France's inflexible position on cultural pluralism is the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, a treaty compelling agencies of the European Union to respect and protect the linguistic rights of minorities (Urrutia 2). Reluctant to assign official prestige to any language other than French, France is one of 8 signatories of the document that has refused to ratify it, as the Conseil Constitutonnel declared the charter to be "incompatible with the constitutional principles of the indivisibility of the Republic, equality under the law and uniqueness of the French people" (9).

The potential of compromise

A promising language policy strategy for France to adopt is one of adapting or assimilating incoming cultural threats, a compromise between the passivity that the Internet suggests and the active, defensive policy of recent governments. This technique relies on the

general public, specifically on their power as consumers to drive or reshape the new cultural aspects with which they are faced, thus lessening anxiety about losing control over national identity. While the French elite and government may be more vocal in their opinions about American culture and the power of English, the general French populous has more of a say based on sheer numbers alone. By literally buying into one new product over another, or actively using certain vocabulary, the people can express their preference and shape future endeavors by other cultural outlets seeking to thrive in France.

This recent trend of French adaptation is best examined in the case study of the Disneyland Paris theme park. After the wildly successful American theme parks, and a subsequently popular park in Tokyo, Disney opened a park outside of a Paris in 1992, despite much opposition from both the intellectual class of France and the local public. During its first three years in operation, however, Disneyland Paris ended up losing $1.5 billion, and rumors of bankruptcy and the eminent closing of the park were in newspapers everywhere (Pells 312). It is important, then, to recognize how Disneyland Paris eventually managed to win the hearts, minds, and pocketbooks of the French. Although at its core Disney represented the dominating American mass culture and blaring promotion of this culture in English, many allowances were made to appeal more to French tendencies, with minor changes being made as early as a few months after the opening, and large-scale management decisions being forced after several years of continual financial distress. Through this combination of adaptation on the part of Disney, and integration by the French public of the park into a less-threatening sphere of culture, the theme park began to thrive.

One of the more notable concessions was adapting the highly structured Disney model to

fit the eating habits of Europeans, especially to appease the French customer base. In the early years of the park, as was traditional in Disney theme parks, no alcohol was sold on-site, a severe clash with the French culinary tradition of serving wine with meals. Additionally, because most guests arrived at and left the park exactly at opening and closing, most customers wanted to have their meals at the same time, creating unmanageable crowds at lunch, unlike the American tendency to snack on and off throughout the day. Disney was forced to adapt the service model they had directly exported from Tokyo Disneyland and the American parks, and eventually allowed alcohol in certain sections of the parks, as well as modifying the structure of personnel to deal with the longer, simultaneous European lunches (Matusitz 230).

Another impressive example of compromise on the part of Disney was regarding language and American imagery in the park. Initially, though French was the official language of the park, it was made evident that English was to be used at almost all times, including for employee meetings (Matusitz 231). French and European languages were later accepted as the first language used by employees at meetings, more signs were published in languages other than English, and additional interpreters were hired for the site after more than 1000 employees quit within the first four months (Matusitz 226, 232). Additionally, the park administration standardized the labor structure for employees by implemented job stands, maximum work week hours, and annualized work schedules (Lainsbury 136-7). Some attractions were also transformed to represent familiar French stories and connect the park more to traditional French culture (Lainsbury 70-5, 166). Following these changes and countless others, Disneyland Paris continued to grow in popularity, receiving over 15 million visitors a year (Annual Review 9). In fact, 51% of visitors in 2010 came from France itself (26).

Though there will always be critics, a large part of mass culture is the fact that the masses consume and support the products, values, and languages with which they are presented. Instead of continuing with the French government's preferred tactic of protectionism, which is only an "attempt to interfere with the natural development of global progress," France should focus on trying to shape potentially threatening aspects of the English language and outside culture through a combination of adaptation and promotion, as exemplified with Disneyland Paris and the potential of the Internet (Gordon and Meunier 115). By implementing this approach, France puts some of the power they presumed to be lost back into the hands of the public, both as consumers and as agents with the capacity to define what is most important to their national identity. It also provides France with the opportunity to join the technological and economic communities to the best of their abilities, instead of lagging behind other global powers as they retreat into their own cultural heritage and keep out all outside influences.

Conclusion

It remains to be seen how the French language will stand up to English in the long run, especially as many fervent channels of English in France are advanced through recent technologies. As global powers start to shift, it is possible that a new linguistic threat is on the horizon. Regardless of the source of the threat, if France wishes to protect its language, and subsequently its sacred national identity, the current language policy needs to be reevaluated. Throughout a long, linguistic history, France has promoted French as the sole national language, shunning regional languages and avoiding foreign influences. In this new era of a "perceived loss of cultural heritage owing to economic and other changes associated with modernity," France

must recognize that restrictive laws such as the Toubon law can only be enforced to a certain point before individual freedoms are infringed upon (Ingram 800). However, any passivity toward the role of English in the country would imply a similar acceptance should be placed upon immigrant languages, thus creating further anxiety for those French opposed to any change which might modify the culture and thus identity of the nation.

France's best strategy may lie in promoting their language and shaping incoming cultural influences through public pressure and opinion, instead of opposing the global forces that continue to bring in new cultural and linguistic influences. The basic structure for a promotional tactic already exists through the more than 45 existing Francophone organizations worldwide. However, these groups are vague in their goals, and it is unclear whether some aim to preserve the French language, teach the language, or merely foster relationships between French-speaking people (Ager, *Language Policy* 127). As France has proved through examples such as Disneyland Paris, however, it has the potential to absorb and actively shape incoming menacing culture, instead of merely succumbing to it or unreasonably trying to resist it. Though it is unlikely the French have to fear the eradication of their language anytime in the near future, the prestige and prevalence of French hangs in the balance, and by reevaluating the threat of English, the role other foreign languages may play, and the importance of French throughout all levels of the citizenry, France can better approach the preservation of their language, and thus national identity.

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