ABSTRACT

LANGUAGE DEFENSE, THE FRENCH RESPONSE
TO GLOBALIZATION: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

by Carmela Esther Nusky

This thesis analyzes the French and Francophone responses to the declining status of the French language in the late nineteenth century and in the late twentieth century. I examine how France has used the Alliance Française to promote French in reaction to both threats. I discuss how the Francophone movement has connected to French and to France to preserve the international status of this language. I evaluate the evidence to determine if French is rightfully a global language. Throughout my analysis, I draw conclusions that differ from the views expressed by Jean-Benoît Nadeau and Julie Barlow in *Sixty Million Frenchmen Can’t Be Wrong, Pas Si Fous, Ces Français!*, and *The Story of French*. I argue that France and the Francophone movement have realized that their cooperation is necessary to secure the future of French as an international language to counteract the domination of English resulting from globalization.
LANGUAGE DEFENSE, THE FRENCH RESPONSE
TO GLOBALIZATION: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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DEDICATION

In memory of

Yvan Mazeran, former Director of the

Alliance Française de Panama

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Introduction

This thesis will examine the French and Francophone responses to the declining status of the French language. I will discuss the two major threats that French and Francophones believe have jeopardized the international status of French. The first threat was the loss of the privileged position of French as a major diplomatic language in Western Europe in the nineteenth century. The second was the domination of English as the result of globalization in the twentieth century. The main focus of my analysis will be the French and Francophone responses to the latter threat.

In Chapter One, I will show how France has been using the Alliance Française to promote the French language so as to secure its position as an international language. In Chapter Two, I will discuss how the Francophone movement has developed its connection with the French language and its relationship with France to preserve this language. In Chapter Three, I will evaluate the evidence to determine if French is rightfully a global language. In each of these chapters, I reach a conclusion that differs from that upheld by Jean-Benoît Nadeau and Julie Barlow in Sixty Million Frenchmen Can’t Be Wrong, Pas Si Fous Ces Français!, and The Story of French.
Chapter 1

The Promotion of French as a Universal Language

In this chapter, I am going to analyze the role that France has been playing to maintain French as an international language. My position is that France is actively promoting French through the Alliance Française, in contrast to the viewpoint held by Nadeau and Barlow, who question France’s active role to secure the future of French in the new millennium. These authors claim that this country is “both the greatest strength and the worst weakness of French, its backbone and its Achilles’ heel” (Story of French 443-444). The authors indicate that the contribution that France has made and continues to make to promote its language is not enough and that further action should be taken. I argue that France is actively engaged in promoting the French language to maintain its international influence through the Alliance Française, with the assistance of Francophones. I also claim that the addition of Francophone cultures to the promotion of the French language and culture into the Alliance activities constitutes a shift toward cultural pluralism.

This chapter discusses the eighteenth-century ideology known as the universality of the French language as a political motivation behind the creation of the Alliance Française. I give particular attention to the Alliance Française as the oldest French institution actively engaged in promoting French outside France. French had been considered the universal language of Europe—that is, the dominant language of European diplomacy—before the Alliance was created in 1883. This privileged position became the backbone of French cultural policy, whose ambition was to spread the influence of the French language worldwide.

1. Arguments in favor of French as a universal language

At the end of the eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century, several arguments were offered to explain why French had become the prevailing language in Western European diplomacy. In La Guerre des Langues et Politiques Linguistiques, Louis-Jean Calvet explains that Voltaire in Siècle de Louis XIV, Montesquieu, and Diderot widely acknowledged the domination of the French language in eighteenth-century Europe (70-71). Calvet further notes that French had replaced Latin as “la langue véhiculaire culturelle” in Europe (250). In
Quand l’Europe Parlait Français, Marc Fumaroli argues that learning French went beyond communication to become a pursuit of fellowship with the intellectuals of the Enlightenment (25-26; qtd. in Phenix 1). Those who spoke French in Europe were “in a very elitist way, the nobles and the high bourgeoisie whose members were often educated in French” (Calvet, Language Wars and Linguistic Politics 188). French was the language of nearly all European sovereigns and elites (Dollot 46), but not the language of the general population (Calvet, Language Wars and Linguistic Politics 188).

1.1. Geopolitics at the basis of the universality of French

The Berlin Academy announced three essay questions: “Qu’est-ce qui fait de la langue française la langue universelle de l’Europe? En quoi mérite-elle cette prérogative? Peut-t-on présumer qu’elle la conserve?” Between 1782 and 1784, European scholars submitted various essays explaining why French was a universal language, that is, the language of international diplomacy of Western Europe. Johann-Christoph Schwab’s “Dissertation sur les Causes de l’Universalité de la Langue Française et la Durée Vraisemblable de Son Empire” and Antoine de Rivarol’s De l’Universalité de la Langue Française received first-place awards (Schwab, Le Grand Concours 22). Schwab realistically pointed to key factors, such as “France's political superiority and spirit of conquest,” and the role played by “colonizers, diplomats and Protestant refugees” throughout Europe (Nadeau and Barlow, Story of French 116-117). For Schwab, political conditions were responsible for the success of French as the dominant language in Europe in the late eighteenth century.

In contrast, Rivarol emphasized the qualities of the French language as a means of communication: “French had gained its status because it was clearer, simpler and more concise [“ce qui n’est pas clair n'est pas français”] (Nadeau and Barlow, Story of French 115). This argument is a favorite among the French because of its idealization of the French language and France. However, a new interpretation of Rivarol suggests that his argument is also political. In “Langue et Politique: Essai de Relecture du Discours sur l’Universalité de la Langue Française d’Antoine de Rivarol,” Pawel Matyaszewski maintains that Rivarol argued that French acquired its privileged position because of the persistent link between politics and language. He points to Rivarol’s perception of the French language as “cumulative d’un héritage historique précieux, fait de traditions et d’expériences du passé,” that is, a safe haven of values that are essential to the nation’s existence (11-12). According to Matyaszewski, language defense takes on a
profound political direction because “elle revient avant tout à rejeter les attaques contre la
tradition et l’histoire, cette double pierre angulaire de toute politique” (19). Language defense
and politics share the same duty of counteracting any attacks against tradition and history. Thus,
Rivarol’s defense of French as the universal language of international diplomacy points to
geopolitics as the motivating force to spread this language in Europe and beyond.

1.2. French ideals as the basis of the universality of the French language

Another view is that the French language is closely tied to the ideals of the French
Revolution of 1789. Nadeau and Barlow underscore the success of the invisible link between
France, the Revolution, and French: “At the time of Revolution-and-Empire, the French
successfully imposed the idea that France and the French language were one” (Story of French
284). French universalism means that French has unique universal values that serve the universal
good and that are conveyed by the French language. In the article “The Crisis of French
Universalism,” Naomi Schor notes how French universalism is frequently recognized as
representative of human rights and the revolutionary ideals of “liberté, égalité et fraternité.” She
points to the French belief in an invisible bond linking universal human rights and the
universality of the French language:

The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, which was in the twentieth century
reappropriated by the United Nations and extended well beyond national boundaries in
The Declaration of the Universal Rights of Man, articulated Frenchness onto
universalism. To this day French national identity remains bound up – at least in official
discourse, but also in ongoing intellectual debates – with universal human rights, of
which France considers itself the inalienable trustee. French, accordingly, is the idiom of
universalit. (46-47) ¹

In Schor’s opinion, it is through the association of the Declaration of the Rights of Man
and the Citizen with the UN’s Declaration of the Universal Rights of Man that the French
language spreads both French universalism in conjunction with revolutionary humanistic ideals.
The conclusion would then be that France is the birthplace and sole proprietor of universal

¹ Schor exposes the “central paradox” of French universalism in the twentieth century by stating that “the very
universalism that is enlisted to press forward claims to human rights is reviled as legitimating oppression and
masking inequity.” She further expresses her disappointment with French universalism by recalling a lesson from
history: “Historically, the rights of the universal citizen have been appropriated, not to say confiscated, by men. If
there exists no female universalism, there does exist a de facto male universalism: masculinity is the default drive of
universalism” (55, 62). Even though the Jews, for instance, were given the status of citizens in eighteenth-century
France, others, such as slaves and women, were not so fortunate.
human rights. Furthermore, Claudine Moïse notes that “national homogeneity – beyond the citizen’s social and political contract – manifests itself through a universalist ideology, as advocated by Rivarol.” However, this author finds a contradiction in the fact that despite claims of democracy in the French language, there are “some citizens that are more equal than others” (218-219). This is not surprising since French universalism and the universality of the French language find their advocates among elitist intellectuals.

2. The Alliance Française, a necessity due to loss of international influence

By the late nineteenth century, France and French were losing international influence to the extent that language defense became necessary. In “‘Francophonie’ and ‘Universalité’: Evolution of Two Notions Conjoined,” Gabrielle Parker points to the utilitarian nature of the Alliance Française, whose creation she calls “a response to the notion that French needed to be defended and expanded” (92). Had the French language fully maintained its international influence in the late nineteenth century, the Alliance Française would have been absolutely unnecessary. Calvet notes that, prior to its creation, there was no need for institutional support to “propagate” the French language (Guerre des Langues et Politiques Linguistiques 250-251; Language Wars and Linguistic Politics 178).

2.1. Language and culture spread geopolitical power

Because of the need to propagate French outside France, the Alliance Française was formed so that French language and French culture would serve and complement one another to restore France’s international influence. In La Politique Culturelle Française et la Diplomatie de la Langue: l’Alliance Française (1883-1940), François Chaubet explains that, at the end of the nineteenth century, the belief in the universality of French civilization brought French intellectuals to a point of convergence that led to the creation of the Alliance Française. The author speaks of two mechanisms that then came about, namely, “l’enseignement de la langue” as the medium and “l’universalisme de la culture et de l’idiome français” as the message (298). Therefore, language teaching would spread the universal values of the French culture worldwide.

According to Nadeau and Barlow, the Alliance Française was an adaptation of the “Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU),” whose aim was “to help poor Jews by creating an educated Jewish middle class, specifically in Eastern Europe, North Africa and the Middle East.” (Story of French 257). However, the authors admit that the founders of these two Alliances
created “a new sphere of influence for France” (Story of French 259-260). The Alliance Française and the Alliance Israélite Universelle realized the usefulness of language: it could spread culture along with geopolitical power.

The Alliance Française came into existence as “l’Association Nationale pour la Propagation de la Langue Française dans les Colonies et à l’Etranger,” and was established in Paris on July 21, 1883 at the Société Historique du Cercle Saint-Simon under the leadership of Paul Cambon, French Ambassador to the protectorate of Tunisia (Bruezière 10-11). Whereas some founders were Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish leaders, others were anti-clerical or Freemasons. They required the backing and the participation of the State and of influential figures in order to succeed. Immediately, they received the support of historians, academy members, philosophers, scientists, editors, and politicians. Some of these supporters included former Governor of Senegal, General Louis de Faidherbe, Suez Canal-builder Ferdinand de Lesseps, microbiologist Louis Pasteur, Hippolyte Taine, Ernest Renan, Gaston Maspéro, Victor Duruy, Ernest Lavisse, Armand Colin, Cardinal Lavigerie, and the Viscount de Vogüé (Labé 3; Nadeau and Barlow, Story of French 261). The decisive role that French intellectuals played in creating and sponsoring the Alliance Française demonstrates how extensively intellectualism influenced French politics and cultural diplomacy. Theirs was a patriotic task; that is, to return to France its due place in the world (Viot, “L’Alliance Française: Bilan et Avenir”156). The State gave its approval to the Alliance Française as “un établissement d’utilité publique” by official decree dated October 23, 1886 (Bruezière 16).

2.2. France uses language and culture to regain international influence

The Alliance’s original mission was to spread the French language in the colonies and abroad. In doing so, the French language and culture would then become useful weapons to restore the country’s prestige at the international level. Jean-Pierre de Launoit, current President of the Alliance Française and of the Alliance Française Foundation, makes this evident: “Il fallait réparer l’échec des armées par la séduction de la culture” (Labé 3). Through cultural activities at the Alliance Française centers, intellectuals would instill among Francophile elites their firm conviction in the universality of the French language and its role in the world. The initial efforts

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2 “Of public interest. The official designation of a project being d’utilité publique, of such an importance that the [S]tate and the people in general are interested in the outcome” (“Utilité publique,” Dahl’s Law Dictionary: French to English/English to French).
of spreading French targeted existing French colonies and territories. As a result of this promotion, elites of Francophile sponsors gathered at Alliance centers worldwide (Bruezière 21, 23, 25-26).

The expression “Alliance Française” has been customarily used to refer to “nominally a group of different associations, locally managed, which have affiliated to the Paris Alliance Française founded in 1883” (Ager, *Identity, Insecurity and Image: France and Language* 177). Originally the worldwide network’s success was based on its partnerships with local Francophone and non-Francophone leaders and with public and private organizations. In this regard, Alain Duboscclard comments: “L’Alliance Française, au fond, est née d’une idée simple: laisser les étrangers eux-mêmes propager la culture française, céder partiellement la responsabilité de l’action culturelle de la France” (143; qtd. in Gosnell 228). The satellite centers of the Alliance Française are locally incorporated under local laws with managerial participation of both French and local individuals, since the traditional model allows for a high degree of autonomy. The Alliance Française network has made it possible for foreigners to participate in French cultural diplomacy and simultaneously help accomplish the Alliance’s original mission of spreading the French language worldwide. This feature in particular has helped to preserve and to increase the popularity of the Alliance Française overseas and to maintain its international appeal despite local feelings toward French foreign policy. Alliance centers are, therefore, local associations, protecting them from the ups and downs of diplomatic problems between France and the host country (Montenay 262). In fact, the Alliance Française prides itself on being French only in France, but not elsewhere, as the following quote suggests: “L’Alliance Française a un statut associatif de droit local. Aussi l’Alliance Française n’est-elle française qu’en France” (Villéchalane, Diat, and Schneider 15).

Because of its worldwide popularity, the Alliance Française has been dear and valuable to the State, as shown in General Charles de Gaulle’s speech in Algiers on October 30, 1943. Honoring its sixtieth anniversary, he praised the Alliance as a symbol and a defender of the French identity. He highlighted the historical significance of its calling as follows:

Nous avons, une fois pour toutes, tiré cette conclusion que c’est par de libres rapports spirituels et moraux établis entre nous-mêmes et les autres que notre influence culturelle peut s’étendre à l’avantage de tous et qu’inversement peut s’accroître ce que nous valons. Organiser ces rapports, telle fut la raison de naître, telle est la raison de vivre, telle sera la raison de poursuivre de l’Alliance Française. (*Discours et Messages* 334)
Thus, General de Gaulle confirmed the Alliance’s destiny not only as a representative of French culture and language, but also as a guardian of French interests. In 1958, the General praised the Alliance Française on occasion of its seventy-fifth anniversary: “L’Alliance française m’apparaît comme une sorte d’ambassadrice permanente de ce qu’il y a au-dessus de la politique … Gloire aux lumières, gloire à la lumière de la France! Merci à l’Alliance française qui se fait un devoir et un honneur de la représenter partout!” (Viot, “Regards sur l’Alliance Française” 291). The Alliance Française had successfully established and maintained spiritual and moral relationships not only among Frenchmen, but also with others who befriended France.

3. The Alliance Française faces financial difficulties

A decline in the monetary contributions made by France to the Alliance Française and its satellite centers led to a financial crisis in the late twentieth century. It is true that the Alliance Française, with the support of the State, had succeeded in creating a worldwide network of Francophiles through cultural diplomacy. However, a large financial cost was involved and France could no longer afford this expense.

3.1. A new foundation for fundraising and modernization

In response to financial difficulties, several events took place. Since the Alliance Française network had historically relied on generous local and Francophone benefactors for aid, it became apparent that the Alliance Française would be in need of further assistance from them. Just as the first eight original founders of the Alliance Française sought the aid of prominent intellectuals to launch their project back in 1883, the Alliance Française now seeks the aid not only of France, but also of Francophone intellectuals and leaders. The Alliance Française charter was modified in the year 2000, limiting the term of the members of the Board of Directors to four years, which could be renewed only once. This modification also allowed for the election of Belgian Jean-Pierre de Launoit, President of the Alliance Française Bruxelles-Europe, as President of the Alliance Française de Paris [in 2004] and of the Alliance Française Foundation (Viot, “Regards sur l’Alliance Française” 295). This was the first time that these positions were held by someone who was not French. Count de Launoit is a prominent business leader who would contribute to the Alliance’s efforts to preserve the continued presence of the French language in the European Union and in the rest of the world (Labé 3).
The Alliance Française Foundation was created on July 26, 2007 as a French non-profit administrative body for fundraising and modernization purposes of the worldwide network (Jacq 1). As a result, the Alliance Française de Paris, which had served both as the official world headquarters and as the École Internationale de Paris, was renamed Alliance Française Paris Ile-de-France and now functions as another satellite center of the Alliance Française.

In 2004, newly appointed President de Launoit reiterated the organization’s mission of promoting the French language, stressing the need for adjustments and urging the worldwide network to step up their efforts to accomplish their mission (Launoit 1). More recently, he recalled the genius of the Alliance founders who thought of calling upon influential foreign Francophiles in their home countries to voluntarily establish cultural associations (Labé 3).

3.2. French and Francophone presence in the Alliance Française Foundation

The board of directors of the Alliance Française Foundation now includes both French and Francophone members. The presence of Francophone members seems to indicate that the Alliance Française and the State are finally realizing that Francophones are needed to ensure the survival of French as an international language. In 2005, the Alliance Française reiterated the worldwide status of its network as the symbol of a France open to a dialogue with all other cultures in the world, adding that the local Alliances constitute a “trait d’union” between local cultures and Francophone cultures (“Le Réseau Mondial/Les Activités” 1), a rather interesting change from spreading primarily the French language and culture worldwide. This opening up to Francophone cultures must be seen as a response to the perceived need to establish a united front to maintain and to strengthen the position of French as an international language despite the increased domination of English around the world.

French intellectual and politician Jacques Rigaud³ enthusiastically seeks support for cultural francophonie. He claims that the Alliance Française is more closely attached to those who become Francophone by choice, such as Romania, eastern and central Europe, Egypt, Brazil, and Argentina when he states the following:

C’est en cela notamment qu’une francophonie purement linguistique serait réductrice, nous avons besoin d’une francophonie culturelle, plus attentive à la création dans tous les

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³ Rigaud was chairman of the State Cultural Policy Review Commission under Minister of Culture Philippe Douste-Blazy from 1996 to 1997. He was the head of staff at the Ministry of Cultural Affairs under Jacques Duhamel and Maurice Druon between 1971 and 1973 (Service Historique de la Défense 177-178).
domaines telle qu’elle vit en Wallonie, au Luxembourg, en Suisse romande, au Québec, dans les Caraïbes, dans le Maghreb, au Proche-Orient, en Afrique. Beaucoup est fait en ce domaine, et l’Alliance y joue son rôle; mas nous devons faire encore plus. … Comme je le disais au début de cet exposé, l’avenir de la langue française est culturel plus que strictement linguistique. (‘Langue et Culture” 73, 76)

4. Conclusion

The very existence of the Alliance Française, including its current modernization efforts, provides evidence to the effect that France willingly continues to promote and to defend French at the international level. Nadeau and Barlow seem to have underestimated these efforts when they hinted that France and the French are not paying attention “to the fact that French is truly a global language in every sense of the word” (Story of French 445-446). Through the Alliance Française, France continues to promote and to defend the use of the French language and culture to elevate the prestige of France worldwide. Accordingly, the Alliance Française has become more internationally oriented in the twenty-first century. The Alliance continues to modernize itself and its international network to the extent that the needs and the circumstances of the State may require to promote French internationally.

Under the leadership of the Alliance Française Foundation, the worldwide network continues to persevere in its efforts to promote the French language as beneficial for France, for others in the European Union, and elsewhere. Jacques Viot urged his fellow Frenchmen to keep alive the spirit of the Alliance founders, namely, the determination to preserve and to develop French along with the men and women who share the language worldwide, amid and beyond the Francophone realm (“Regards sur l’Alliance Française” 297). The Francophone presence in the administration of the Alliance Française and the inclusion of Francophone cultures have paved the way for a critical analysis of the role that Francophone communities and influential figures play in defending French throughout the world. This is considered in the following chapter.
Chapter 2

The Francophone Stance on the French Language

In this chapter, I will contrast my view to that of Nadeau and Barlow on the role that Francophones play in the future of the French language. I feel that the future of French depends largely on the input made by Francophones. Nadeau and Barlow maintain that Francophones need to approach the French language independently, without the political influence of France. In The Story of French, these authors speak approvingly of Francophones outside France who have a “self-reliant approach to the language.” According to Nadeau and Barlow, this means that Francophones “accept the idea that if French is to flourish, it’s up to them to act” (431). My position is that Francophones need support from France. Nadeau and Barlow see the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) as the means through which Francophones could work together internationally in behalf of the French language. The OIF is the international organization that represents French-speaking countries and communities, most of which were former French colonies. I agree that the OIF will play an important role in maintaining the international influence of the French language. However, due to the economic limitations of most OIF member countries, this organization will continue to depend heavily on the financial contributions and political guidance of France.

This chapter examines the meaning of “francophonie” from the standpoint of scholars, writers, and leaders. It also provides a brief history of the Francophone movement from a cultural initiative to a political organization. Finally, I discuss the relationship between the OIF and France in their efforts to advance the French language.

1. The meaning of “francophonie” as seen by scholars

Nadeau and Barlow express their belief that the Francophone identity is defined by language. I believe it is necessary to closely examine various definitions of francophonie to determine just how significant the French language is for the Francophone world.

In ‘Francophonie’ in the 1990s: Problems and Opportunities, Dennis Ager describes francophonie as “a changing concept,” which he defines in three ways. These are: (1) “the French language and its future,” (2) “the values, ideals and identity of an imagined community of nations and peoples,” and (3) “a recently founded international organization of the governments
of some 50 countries or regions” (177). Ager’s first definition of francophonie, “the French language and its future,” remains a main concern for both France and Francophones as a means of communication at the national and international levels. French efforts to preserve the national language, cultural identity, and political influence continue to this day, as discussed in the previous chapter. The OIF attempts to bring together the “values, ideals and identity” of what Ager has described as “an imagined community of nations and peoples.”

According to Ager’s second and third definitions of francophonie, Francophones aspire to turn their “values, ideals, and identity” into a reality of their own; in other words, the world of subjectivity, which is comprised of ideal concepts, claims to appropriate a tangible world where Francophone needs and wants are met by bringing the French language into the cultural and political arenas.

1.1. Sociolinguistic and geopolitical definitions of “francophonie”

In contrast to Ager’s definitions, Calvet defines “francophonie” in terms of two realities, which are: (1) “Francophonie with a capital F,” which refers to a geopolitical reality of Francophone jurisdictions, and (2) “francophonie with a lowercase f,” which refers to the sociolinguistic reality of the lands in which French plays a major role (Le Marché aux Langues 192). The nature of reality constitutes the differentiating factor of these two definitions. By calling attention to geopolitics and sociolinguistics, Calvet underscores their influence on the individual, regional, and community use and perception of a language aside from abstract idealistic considerations.

Michel Tétu distinguishes between (1) linguistic francophonie, written in lower-case, and (2) geopolitical francophonie, written in upper case, as follows:

(1) francophonie: généralement l’ensemble des peoples ou des groups de locuteurs qui utilisent partiellement ou entièrement la langue française dans leur vie quotidienne ou dans leurs communications.
(2) Francophonie: le regroupement des gouvernements, des pays, ou des instances officielles qui ont en commun l’usage du français dans leurs travaux ou leurs échanges.

In addition to linguistic and geopolitical definitions of “francophonie,” Tétu adds a cultural definition:
L’espace francophone représente une réalité non exclusivement géographique ni même linguistique, mais aussi culturelle; elle réunit qui, de près ou de loin, éprouvent ou expriment une certaine appartenance à la langue française ou aux cultures francophones… (14)

Two conclusions can be drawn from Tétu’s definitions: First, Francophones may be set apart from politics since their concerns do not necessarily agree with political and governmental pursuits. Second, the Francophone reality reaches beyond geographic and linguistic boundaries into the intangible realm of culture because of a shared sense of belongingness, either to the French language or to Francophone cultures. These Francophones are most concerned with the survival of French as an international language and Francophone cultures because these constitute essential parts of their lives.

1.2. Beyond a linguistic definition of “francophonie”

Some prefer a cultural definition of francophonie that does not extend beyond the French language. For instance, Maurice Druon describes “francophonie” as “pays ayant le français en partage,” a definition which was agreed upon at the Fifth Francophone Summit held in Mauritius in 1993 (Park 91). Druon’s definition prioritizes language over culture while acknowledging that French is shared by others, instead of imposed upon. Moreover, Parker proposes a post-colonial francophonie on the basis of solidarity:

If the centre (France) is perceived as oppressive, francophonie can gain strength from solidarity. Whereas ‘francophonie institutionnelle,’ that is, the OIF remains suspected of neocolonialism, the community of people/s who make up ‘francophonie’ can create an ‘espace de solidarité’, reconciliation, hybridity and identity/ies. This amounts to a reinvention of francophonie from the outside. If this is the case, then francophonie is postcolonial not so much because it comes into its own ‘after’ colonization is over, but because it goes ‘beyond’.” (101)

According to Parker, francophonie extends beyond the colonial past. Thus, Francophones could base their relationship with the French language beyond France. To understand how Francophone writers have been building their relationship with the French language, a closer look at some of their statements is helpful.

2. The meaning of the French language as seen by Francophone literary writers

In order to better understand the various meanings of francophonie, it is also useful to look at what Francophone writers say about the French language. French is claimed by a large
number of speakers who have defined their identities in a fashion other than the defense of the French language; instead, they define it through a sense of belongingness.

2.1. Writing in French, “francité” and francophonie converge

According to Tétu, the term “francité” dates back to the first half of the twentieth century and refers to “les caractéristiques linguistiques, culturelles, éventuellement ‘l’esprit français’.” It was not until the 1960s that the term “francophonie” appeared in the writings of linguists and some politicians (18). Léopold Sé达尔 Senghor, Francophone leader, poet, writer, and a founder of the “négritude” movement, describes “francité” as “les vertus que véhiculent la langue et la civilisation françaises” (Dormoy 1066). Interestingly, what Tétu calls “characteristics,” Senghor calls “virtues,” thus ascribing idealistic values to linguistic and cultural characteristics of “l’esprit français.” Senghor also provides five reasons for black elites, whether politicians or writers, to continue using the French language. In his opinion, “many, thinking in French, speak French better than their mother tongue, diluted as it is with Francisms (sic), at least in the cities.” A second reason is the richness of French vocabulary. French syntax comes third, since this is a language of analysis and of synthesis. French stylistics come fourth, since “French style could be defined as a symbiosis of Greek subtlety and Latin rigor, a symbiosis enlivened by Celtic passion” (“French, Language of Culture” 36-38).

Finally, Senghor points to the significance of “French Humanism,” which he claims, “had passed from assimilation to cooperation: to symbiosis.” The French language becomes a tool for the process of constructing the “Civilization of the Universal” through “totalization” (sic) and “socialization.” For its part, “Francophonie is that integral Humanism that’s woven into the earth,” a “symbiosis” (“French, Language of Culture” 38, 41). According to Senghor, the relationship between Francophones and the French language is mutually beneficial. The scope of action that is thus attributed to the French language is highly ambitious, for it also entails carrying out social reform worldwide with limited resources and an unequal distribution of riches (Nadeau and Barlow, Pas Si Fous, Ces Français! 270). The goals of socialization and cooperation could not be fully accomplished by a single nation, or even by a bloc of nations, due to political and financial constraints. Nonetheless, Francophones continue to strive to achieve such a goal.

In contrast with Senghor’s admiration for “francité,” Algerian-born French writer Albert Camus describes French as his fatherland as expressed in his famous phrase “Ma patrie, c’est la
The French language was his source of inspiration that gave him a sense of belongingness beyond territorial boundaries. I believe this inspiring phrase deserves consideration and so did Nadeau and Barlow, who called Camus’ connection to French “linguistic patriotism” and chose this phrase for the flap cover of *The Story of French* (291). French and Francophone writers in particular share this connection with the French language. In Camus’ case, this linguistic identity stems from his interaction with the French language as fatherland.

Assia Djebar, Maghrebi writer, has her own particular sense of belongingness to the French language, identifying herself as “femme d’écriture” who is attached to the French language and has “une seule écriture: celle de la langue française.” French becomes a “moyen de transformation” as long as writing continues to be an adventure, she notes. Writing in French becomes her only “véritable territoire.” Djebar identifies herself with two languages: French is the language of her writings, whereas Arabic is oral language, the language of her spoken words. There has been an inner struggle between written French, which she describes as “langue du père,” “un orgueilleux prédire,” and oral Arabic, her “langue maternelle” that offers resistance and counterattacks (41-46). Hence, two languages and two sets of memories reside in Djebar as a Francophone writer. Nonetheless, each language performs a distinct function: her paternal authoritarian French acts as the language of writing, the language of adventure, whereas her maternal Arabic utters the unheard voices of Algerian women (Wardle 217-219).

Francophone writers appropriate French and make Francophone cultures known in France and worldwide, as Camus and Djebar have done. Like Senghor, Francophone writers greatly value the usefulness of the French language.

3. A francophonie in need of transformation

This section presents a brief history of the Francophone movement from its beginning in the early 1970s to the late 1990s. During this period, the Francophone movement was transformed from a cultural initiative to a political project. Had it remained a cultural initiative, the international influence of the Francophone movement would have dwindled. The necessity of developing a political organization is a main point of disagreement with the view held by Nadeau and Barlow concerning the relationship of the Francophone movement with France.

According to Nadeau and Barlow, francophonie as an international organization began in Niamey in 1970 when representatives from twenty-one French-speaking countries and
governments created the Agency for Cultural and Technical Cooperation (ACCT) and Jean-Marc Léger was appointed director general. The ACCT “was originally supposed to be focused on international development and foreign aid. The original idea was to create an organization of countries united by language, not for language.” In other words, they would be united because they used French as a primary means of communication, but language was not to become their reason for being or their institutional goal (Nadeau and Barlow, Story of French 342).

Nadeau and Barlow note in The Story of French that, following Canada’s and Ivory Coast’s initiative, “Institut Francophone pour l’Énergie et l’Environnement” was created in 1987 with headquarters in Quebec “to help poorer members to develop energy policies and energy-production techniques adapted to local conditions and resources” (344). Other Francophone operators are TV5 and the Agence Universitaire Francophone. The OIF “also supplies technical training and briefs civil servants to prepare them to participate in international trade talks and forums such as the World Trade Organization” (346-347). The fact that the OIF prepares civil servants to participate in international trade talks indicates that, as an organization, it understands how far reaching the influence of the French language could be if properly directed. The OIF needs to build a unified position in view of the fact that half of its members are among the poorest nations in the world. It seeks to benefit from the fact that two G8 nations, France and Canada, are among its members, as well as Belgium and Switzerland. Under the leadership of former UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali and former Senegalese President Abdou Diouf, the OIF has become “an international organization with scope and ambition to match the Commonwealth's, and a clearer sense of purpose” (346). The Agence Universitaire Francophone, created in 1961, continues to result “in the world-wide exchange of technologies and expertise today” (423).

Calvet explains that Francophone heads of state Senghor and Habib Bourguiba conceived the idea of a geopolitical francophonie in 1964. At its first summit, the OCAM\(^4\) submitted this project to France as a “Commonwealth à la française” in 1966. In Robert Chaudenson’s words, development and education are the main concerns for French-speaking African countries to collectively use and spread the French language (Calvet, Politiques Linguistiques 103, 105, 107). Among the four founders of francophonie as an international institution, Dominique Wolton

\(^4\) OCAM stands for African and Malagasy Common Organization, an organization of French-speaking countries in Africa that was created in 1965 and is currently inactive (“African and Malagasy Common Organization (OCAM),” Encyclopedia of the United Nations and International Agreements).
counts two other Francophone leaders: Hamani Diori from Niger and Norodom Sihanouk from Cambodia. The four founders decided on some form of coordination in Niamey in 1970 practically without the auspices of France. Wolton comments: “La francophonie n’est donc pas une création de la France, mais le résultat d’une volonté politique de ceux qui, ayant la langue française en partage, voulaient en faire un outil de solidarité” (22).

3.1. Transformed francophonie, from a cultural institution to a political organization

Whether francophonie as an international institution targeted development and democracy or solidarity, the truth was that France was not the originator of this project (Nadeau and Barlow, Pas Si Fous, Ces Français! 269-270). France deliberately refused to endorse francophonie as an international institution in the 1960s to avoid the issue of neocolonialism. At the summit held in Antananarivo (Madagascar) on November 22-23, 2005, a new charter was approved acknowledging that the original ACCT was officially renamed Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) [since 1998] (Agence Internationale de la Francophonie 2-3). This transformation turned the representative agency of the francophonie into an international organization. Hence, francophonie acquired a more active, political role at the international level, allegedly becoming capable of making significant decisions and taking major actions before other international organizations. Forty-nine states and governments are listed as OIF members, while there are four associate members and five observers5 (“International Organization of the Francophonie (OIF),” Political Handbook of the World 2007 1491).

3.2. Politics stand behind the OIF stance on language

For their part, the OIF and the heads of state of Francophone countries have made statements regarding the meaning of the French language and Francophone cultures to their respective nations and communities and to the world in general.

5 OIF member states and governments include Belgium, the French Community of Belgium, Benin, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Canada–New Brunswick, Canada–Quebec, Cape Verde, the Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of the Congo, Côte d’Ivoire, Djibouti, Dominica, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, France, Gabon, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Laos, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Moldova, Monaco, Morocco, Niger, Romania, Rwanda, St. Lucia, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Switzerland, Togo, Tunisia, Vanuatu, and Vietnam. Also, Albania, Andorra, Greece, and Macedonia are associate members while the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia are observers (“International Organization of the Francophonie (OIF),” Political Handbook of the World 2007 1491).
Canada has played a leading role in the development of francophonie as an international institution. According to Michael B. Kline and Nancy C. Mellerski, six million out of the seven million “Québécois” speak French. Furthermore, Francophones account for 24 percent of the population in Canada and for 85 percent in Quebec. The Province of Quebec is particularly interested in preserving French as “the vehicle of Quebec’s history, tradition, and cultural identity” (129). Nadeau and Barlow applaud Quebec’s successful campaign of language protection as the first to successfully lead a campaign against English: “Le gouvernement du Québec a également édicté une série de lois qui limitent l'usage de l'anglais dans la signalisation et les communications publiques et qui obligent les immigrants à scolariser leurs enfants en français s'ils choisissent l’école publique” (Pas Si Fous, Ces Français! 166). For French-speaking Canadians, the French language is obviously a matter of community and regional identity that goes beyond sociolinguistic and geopolitical aspects. “L’espace francophone” constitutes their reality.

3.3. The OIF and France at odds with one another

France became actively engaged in the OIF in the late 1990s. At present, this country provides most of the funding for the OIF’s activities. The main reason is the desire on the part of France to spread its political influence and to maintain the international status of the French language. The actions taken by the OIF as a geopolitical organization would not necessarily reflect or benefit the interests of all OIF members equally. For instance, Parker laments that France might have been using the OIF as a means to obtain political leverage at the international level, as seen in the case of cultural exception:

Francophonie remains a political organization on which France relies in order to get votes and support in international fora. The Moncton Summit (September 1999) and the Third Conférence Ministérielle sur la Culture (Cotonou, June 2001) offer an illustration of this, since they enlisted the whole spread of member countries to support and defend France’s “exception culturelle” (i.e., the exclusion of cultural “production” from World Trade agreements). (97)

In Parker’s opinion, cultural exception was used as a protectionist measure against international competition. It covered French music, cinema, and audiovisual productions. Wolton expresses very clearly the OIF’s disappointment with the role that France has played, quoting OIF Secretary General Abdou Diouf’s statement of March 9, 2006 at the inauguration of
“l’Année Senghor”: “La France ne fait pas tout ce qu’elle devrait pour la francophonie” (Lion n. pag.). As a communication expert and an advocate in favor of an active francophonie in economics, academics, and media, Wolton criticizes the ambiguous position taken vis-à-vis the OIF pondering whether France actually believes in it, as he regretted that France was not promoting the OIF within its own territory. However, Wolton acknowledges that France has been taking positive actions at the international level: “La France a fait pression, à juste titre, pour réorganiser la francophonie internationale, mais elle n’a pas fait la même chose chez elle.” (Lion n. pag.).

France and the OIF have recently signed an agreement to open the organization’s headquarters in Paris in the year 2010. The building, called “House of La Francophonie,” will be equipped by France and will be used by “La Francophonie” for a renewable period of 50 years. Diouf points out that the facilities will shelter “all sections of the OIF, currently scattered on three sites in Paris” (“Francophonie Quebec Summit” 17733C).

4. The OIF seeks linguistic pluralism

Despite some tensions, France and the OIF agree to support linguistic pluralism internationally. Both France and the OIF member countries find it necessary to counteract the increasing domination of English in international organizations. As a bloc, OIF member countries would continue to use the French language to achieve economic development and to attain an influential voice directed at international organizations. As a result, the number of French speakers would continue to grow and France would maintain its prestige. Additionally, Francophone countries could aspire for their native languages to have an equal standing with French and other international languages.

The defense of the French language is no longer a priority for the OIF, but a means to an end. According to Parker, “language has turned from an end to a tool of development,” adding that “francophonie is now perceived as an area of political cooperation” (97). Language defense has been transformed into the defense of cultural diversity, including linguistic pluralism.

In 1998, former UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali defended what he called plurilingualism – or what we may call linguistic pluralism – at a symposium in Geneva in the following terms: “Words express a culture, a way of thinking and a world view. For all these reasons, I think that much in the way democracy within a state is based on pluralism, democracy between states must be based on plurilingualism” (Nadeau and Barlow, Story of French 351).
Interestingly, this position indicated that language identity could be pluralistic since every language and every culture have their own particular way of expressing “nuance and refinement” (Nadeau and Barlow, Story of French 351). Boutros-Ghali’s position stated that diplomats should be able to communicate in languages other than their own. As OIF Secretary-General, his belief was that this organization would be fully capable of participating in the international arena. The OIF was unanimously endorsed by the UN Assembly General as an international organization on December 18, 1998, constituting a global project that would defend cultural diversity and linguistic pluralism (“La Francophonie Défend une Vision Humaniste du Monde” 43, 44). In Boutros-Ghali’s case, this stance does not alter his position vis-à-vis French as the “lingue d’une communauté, comme un trait d’union entre plusieurs continents” (Emanciper la Francophonie 60). His point of view encourages cooperation instead of competition among Francophone countries.

According to Wolton, the francophonie plays a significant role in turning the issue of cultural diversity into a political affair when he states the following:

La situation n’est pas brillante pour la langue française. Il y a même beaucoup à faire et vite, si l’on veut conserver au français un statut de langue internationale. Ce que n’ont pas compris les « réalistes »? Seule la francophonie donnera demain un statut mondial à la France...
Et d’ailleurs, en trente ans, tout a changé dans le sens d’une beaucoup plus grande sensibilité à la diversité culturelle. La preuve ? Cette signature à l’Unesco, le 21 octobre 2005, lors de l’assemblée générale, de la convention reconnaissant le principe du respect de la diversité culturelle. Défendre la diversité culturelle, c’est évidemment reconnaître la diversité linguistique, car il n’y a pas de culture sans langue. En trois décennies à peine, c’est-à-dire la vitesse de la mondialisation économique, la diversité culturelle est devenue politique. (18)

Wolton’s statements illustrate the transformation process undergone by the Francophone movement into a political organization capable of bringing cultural issues to the realm of international diplomacy. Sociolinguistics and politics would then overlap in “l’espace francophone.”

5. The OIF’s attraction to non-Francophone countries

The OIF has become attractive to non-French-speaking nations and communities. There are several possible reasons for this interest. Nadeau and Barlow cite the link between the OIF’s goals of education, democracy, economic development, and the promotion of French: “C’est
ainsi que la francophonie jouit d’une influence certaine au sein de l’ONU et suscite l’intérêt de pays qui n’ont pourtant aucun passé francophone, comme la Grèce et l’Autriche, parce qu’elle fédère ses membres autour de la notion de plurilinguisme plutôt que de la stricte promotion de la langue française” (Pas Si Fous, Ces Français! 270). Linguistic pluralism is an attractive feature of francophonie as an international institution, for it permits the use of the French language with other languages. In this regard, Parker points to “a new sense that the promotion and propagation of French in the world are inseparable from an action in favour of plurilingualism (sic) to be pursued in France and in the European Union, as well as at the levels of international organizations” (98).

Interestingly, the presence of countries without a traditional French-speaking population may lead to a new definition of political Francophones: being politically engaged, but not linguistically or culturally engaged, Francophones. As a result thereof, the interest in the use and the promotion of French might dwindle. So far, the OIF continues to realize that the promotion and the use of French are crucial for economic development and education, made evident by the recently approved “Quebec City Declaration,” which was issued in Quebec City at the Twelfth Francophone Summit on October 17-19, 2008. The heads of state and government of countries using French as a common language determined to undertake the following actions regarding French:

(1) Enhance the position of the French language in their educational systems while developing high-quality public and private education;
(2) Do what is needed to effectively enforce national and international provisions on the use of French in international organizations;
(3) Facilitate the broadcast of and access to TV5 Monde, along with public and private channels;
(4) Take steps to enhance the status and use of French in economic, social, cultural, tourism and scientific fields in their societies. (Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada 2)

The heads of state of French-speaking countries and communities further determined to call upon the OIF and its operators:

(1) To adopt a genuine policy for promoting French that incorporates and brings synergy to the actions of the OIF, of its operators and of all relevant civil society players;
(2) To increase the human and financial resources they devote to the French language and take vigorous action to implement the resolution that accompanies this declaration (Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada 2).

These statements indicate that institutional OIF is united by French as a common language out of need, and that they are aware of the financial and socio-political limitations of their respective nations and communities. French serves as a building tool of cooperation and progress to achieve economic development and to close the gap between industrialization and poverty. This relationship with the French language is utilitarian, or mutually beneficial, at best. OIF members became aware of the organization’s political impact and influence at the international level. As a group, their voices were no longer isolated and unheard, but they could be heard at major international organizations, such as the UN and UNESCO.

6. Conclusion

The OIF continues to state its goal of defending French. The linguistic reality of most Francophone nations and communities is thus acknowledged through linguistic pluralism. In education, however, French continues to be viewed as a valuable tool for cooperation and development. Most of the former French colonies and territories are scattered in five continents and are now independent nations, maintaining the French language as a means of communication, either as an official or unofficial language. French remains an international language thanks mainly to the number of former colonies, now independent nations, and not to the number of French speakers. Outside France, French is the language of minorities, many of whom are elites, but minorities in any event. In order to protect French as an international language and to turn it into a global language, more is needed than a large number of French-speaking countries and regions. It is necessary to protect and to preserve the French language at all levels of society, particularly among younger generations and not only among a few, if the international status of French is to be maintained. New OIF members need to promote and to protect the French language through massive education.

Nadeau and Barlow warn that France and the French language need to preserve their connection to francophonie and to the OIF in the following terms: “French could also live without Dakar, Beirut, Brussels, Geneva, Abidjan and Kinshasa, but it is up to the French to decide whether they want to speak an international, or merely a national, language” (Story of French 444). The scope of the French language has long ago transcended the physical boundaries
of France and French territory to Francophone communities and nations worldwide. In agreement with Parker’s position (97), Nadeau and Barlow disapprove of the fact that the OIF had become a pillar of French foreign policy, since this organization was an initiative of Quebec and African countries to achieve international cooperation in the late 1960s. After an initial reluctance out of fear of charges of neo-colonialism, France finally gave its support out of convenience. Nadeau and Barlow remark that the idea “s’inscrivait cependant parfaitement dans [la] politique centenaire de diplomatie culturelle” of France, which is responsible for nearly 80 percent of the OIF’s budget (Pas Si Fous, Ces Français! 269-270). The reason for France to support the OIF is the political advantage that is gained under the banner of cultural cooperation and development. It is not surprising, then, that because of financial contributions to the OIF, French cultural diplomacy may impose a heavy load on the organization’s activities. Legitimacy is not the question, but rather it is the pursuit of mutual benefit that seems to maintain a connection between France and the OIF: a stronger international voice in exchange for economic and cultural cooperation.

Regarding cultural cooperation, Barlow points to educational projects that create links between Africa and France, Quebec, and Belgium. Barlow notes that the OIF faces the challenge of developing educational systems sufficiently enough “so that French-speaking African populations could become literate” (“What Role Should the OIF Play to Promote French as a Global Language” 1). Nadeau and Barlow favor multilateral cooperation, and not exclusively with France. As an example of cooperation, the authors cite the “Centre de Lecture et d’Animation Communautaire (Centre for Reading and Community Activity),” whose creator was Quebec’s National Assembly Library headmaster Philippe Sauvageau6 (Story of French 347). Even though the OIF benefits from projects like this, the defense of the French language is not the organization’s main concern.

In Chapter 3, I will introduce French views on globalization as a threat to the French language, focusing on the process of globalization of languages and moving down to the status of French and English as international and global languages.

6 The project consisted in establishing “small libraries —of about 2,500 books—that would offer other types of services, including Internet access, games, movie-screening facilities and sound systems for shows” in rural areas. Since 1985, seventeen countries, from Lebanon to Haiti, have benefited from the formation of two hundred and thirteen CLACs (Story of French 347).
Chapter 3

The Pursuit of a Global Language Status in Response to Globalization

In this chapter, I examine the definitions of “globalization” and “Americanization” from the French perspective to compare these to the definitions presented by Nadeau and Barlow in *Pas Si Fous, Ces Français!* and to determine the French response to the threat posed by globalization to the French language. I argue that French perceptions of globalization and Americanization are more complex than Nadeau and Barlow indicate. These authors identify three forms of globalization, which are economic, cultural, and political in nature. According to Nadeau and Barlow, the French oppose the cultural form of globalization that they perceive as Americanization: “la mondialisation culturelle, expression désignant par euphémisme l’américanisation du monde” (271-272, 277). However, the French do not object to engaging in economic globalization through international trade or to participate in the globalization of stronger political organizations that would redistribute wealth around the world (272, 277). In this chapter, I also analyze the concepts of international and global languages to determine the validity of Nadeau and Barlow’s claim that “French is truly a global language in every sense of the word” (*Story of French* 280). I argue that French is not a global language, a status which English currently enjoys. To counteract Americanization, France is using cultural diversity to promote linguistic pluralism instead of language domination.

1. French meanings of “globalization”

The French use the terms globalization and Americanization in terms that differ from those used in North America: economic globalization is called in France “mondialisation” while “globalisation” refers to what is perceived as the Americanization of language. Robin Adamson explains the subtle nuances of globalization and “mondialisation”:

Globalisation constitutes what the language defenders see as the greatest external threat to French identity and therefore to the French language. Globalisation is often referred in France as Americanisation… The French also use the term *mondialisation* to signify a more benign form of globalisation, one fostering cultural, economic, political and linguistic diversity. (158)
Adamson distinguishes her definitions from those given by language defenders Serge Arnaud, Michel Guillou, and Albert Salon:

* Mondialisation is, they claim, a neutral process involving the extension to the whole world of modern techniques, modern methods and content of communication and the interaction of ideas and behaviours... *Globalization* (for which they deliberately retain the American spelling) is the use by the United States and the English-speaking countries of the process of *mondialisation* in the service of their own interests and of the expansion of their concept of the world, their commercial empire, their culture and their language. (Qtd. in Adamson 159)

1.1. French reactions to Americanization as a threat to language

According to Adamson and Arnaud et al., “mondialisation” is not dangerous, but benign or neutral, whereas globalization as Americanization jeopardizes the French identity and language through self-serving American ideological, cultural, and linguistic expansionism. Globalization is perceived as Americanization, a danger to the French language, whereas “mondialisation” is welcomed as positive, allowing for diversity and other alternatives to the American model.

1.2. Reactions to globalization as a political threat

While language defenders differentiate between globalization and “mondialistion,” Rigaud warns that globalization is a political threat. He describes the entire process of globalization as the imposition of Americanization that, he admits, seems irreversible: “La mondialisation est l’expression d’un rapport de forces; elle entraîne une domination de fait de l’anglo-américain en termes statistiques ou quantitatifs qui, à vue humaine, semble irréversible” (“Langue et Culture” 77). To counteract this situation, Rigaud demands that language come to the rescue sustaining, expressing, and strengthening French universalism. Neither France nor Francophone communities can reverse the political and economic forces that determined the linguistic domination of American English, he claims (“Langue et Culture” 73-75). His stance has been described as practically “une position d’anti-américanisme primaire” (qtd. in Looseley 9). Rigaud also expresses his wishes for French to stand on equal grounds with English at international organizations and for this language to become a political priority beyond the Francophone world (“Langue et Culture” 77). The domination of English, which Rigaud mentions, has been the result of globalization.
2. Towards a definition of a global language

A thought-provoking question to consider is whether French has the status of a global language in the new millennium. Nadeau and Barlow defend this status claiming that “French is truly a global language in every sense of the word” (Story of French 280). These authors base this claim on the number of French speakers and French-speaking nations and communities and on the fact that French is a main working language among the United Nations.

2.1. Definitions of international and global languages

David Crystal points out that French still “plays an important role, being an official language of most international political bodies” (French,” Encyclopedic Dictionary of Language and Languages). However, to play an important role does not necessarily mean being a global language. For instance, a definition of “international language” is provided as follows:

Any [language] used internationally, whether all over the world (hence ‘global’) or in one area; whether recognized officially as a language e.g. of diplomacy, or arising simply through bilingual contacts across many countries; whether native in one or more countries, such as English or Spanish, or e.g. an international auxiliary language such as Esperanto; and so on. (“International language,” The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics)

According to the above definition, an international language could be considered global if used all over the world, a condition that can be measured in terms of geographical areas, the number of native and nonnative speakers, and the number of countries where the language has an official, unofficial, or secondary status. George Weber explains that an international language is “a language that is of more than a local importance and that is used as the lingua franca by significant numbers of people in significant areas” (“International Languages” 22). Crystal defines lingua franca as an “auxiliary language used to permit routine communication between groups of people who speak different native languages” (“Lingua Franca,” Encyclopedic Dictionary of Language and Languages). Moreover, Robert L. Trask defines international language as “a language which is widely used, for a variety of purposes, by people in different countries, especially by people for whom it is not a mother tongue” (127-128). Weber and Trask point to a major requirement that must be met. Before a language could be considered international, it has to be a lingua franca among nonnative speakers. Crystal provides another definition and an explanation of the nature of an international language:
A language which is in widespread use as a medium of communication among different countries. (‘International language,” Encyclopedic Dictionary of Language and Languages)

A language [which] has traditionally become an international language for one chief reason: the power of its people – especially their political and military power. (English as a Global Language 9)

These definitions bring out another important characteristic of an international language other than being used by multiple countries as a lingua franca: the political and military power of the people who claim this language as their own. Globalization expert Manfred B. Steger’s explains how a global language comes about: “The globalization of languages can be viewed as a process by which some languages are increasingly used in international communication while others lose their prominence and even disappear for lack of speakers” (82). According to this definition, language usage and the number of speakers are key factors that determine whether a language would survive or not.

2.2. English, a global language or the world’s lingua franca

The predominance of English in international communication today affects cultural, political, and economic affairs everywhere in the world. In the Encyclopedic Dictionary of Language and Languages, Crystal calls attention to the fact that “English is the world’s chief international language” (‘International Language’). English has come out victorious as a global language, a status that the French covet for their own language. The levels of vehicular use as lingua franca for French and English, and the political and military power of their respective countries are not the same. The result thereof is that only English has become a global language. Political power is the second element for consideration to determine the status of English as a global language. Ager makes the following comment on the role of power:

The battle in which French is engaged with English is less a battle of languages than one of power. Vehicular English is a tool, used by those with the most power. At the moment those in the most power are citizens of the United States, which is not about to cede economic, scientific or diplomatic power to anyone. (‘Francophonie’ in the 1990s: Problems and Opportunities 181)

Calvet and Lía Varela acknowledge the unique situation of English as a global language as a direct result of globalization when they note: “L’anglais… pourrait être défini non pas
comme une langue internationale parmi d’autres mais comme la langue ‘globale’, résultat de la globalisation” (58-59). Trask highlights the unique position English has achieved among the world’s population as the first global or world language ever:

English has now become the first global language or world language the planet has ever seen… [It] now enjoys some kind of special status in almost every country in the world: as the sole official language, as a co-official language, or as the designated principal foreign language. … [O]ne quarter of the world’s population – approaching 1.5 billion people – are (sic) in English (128).

Commenting on the number of English speakers and language learners, Steger indicates that there were over 350 million native English speakers by the 1990s and 400 million speakers of English as a second language. He notes that Internet content is predominantly in English and that almost half of the world’s growing number of foreign students attend institutions in Anglo-American countries (84). In “La (Socio)linguistique au Filtre de l’Inventaire des Langues du Monde. et Quelques Considérations sur Ses Rapports avec la Sociologie,” Calvet uses a chart to rank the world’s top twelve languages according to the number of countries where these are official, co-official, national, or co-national languages. English ranks first with 45 countries whereas French comes second with 30. Based on language presence on the Internet, English is again the winner with 35.20% and French ranks sixth with 4.20%. As to the number of speakers, English ranks first and French comes last in the twelfth position (263-265).

Regarding the claim that French is a global language, Trask admits that “[i]n eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe, French was the international language of diplomacy, of fine arts and high culture, and of polite society generally; most educated people could and did speak French, even if their mother tongue was (say) Russian or German”(128). However, the universality of French did not mean being a global language because French language domination was limited to Western Europe at that time as Weber states:

No other language has ever been in the situation that English finds itself today. … French came closest to it in the 17th centuries (sic) but has since clearly and decisively lost its struggle for supremacy to English. The growth of English as world language is still accelerating. Official attempts in some parts of the world to reduce the use of English are likely to be thwarted by the sheer momentum of technological progress whose language English has become. (“International Languages” 22)

Weber provides the reasons why English is a global or world language:
Only the explosive and still accelerating growth of English as the world’s lingua franca looks like an undisputable result of the modern travel and communications mania…. The English language has always been especially open to foreign influence and has thrived on imports. A weak and ailing language cannot take such a relaxed attitude. (“The End: Scattered Thoughts” 6, 12)

3. Linguistic pluralism, cultural diversity, and the future of the French language

Although French is not a global language, it remains an international language and even a language of diplomacy. Instead of advocating for the domination of French as a global language, France is now resorting to linguistic pluralism to retain its international significance,

Nadeau and Barlow join former UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali’s defense of “plurilingualism” as “the state of actively promoting the use of different languages in international institutions—ultimately, to the actual efforts individuals within those organizations make to practise more than one language” (Story of French 350). This linguistic pluralism becomes a political tool in the hands of the French State and the OIF to seek an equal standing with English to counteract Americanization. Sharing a common language would not be enough. Cultural diversity conveys a message of pluralistic cultures with linguistic pluralism. France is embracing cultural diversity instead of language domination for political reasons. Once again power is at stake in the globalization of languages. According to Nadeau and Barlow, “language is a political issue in that the use of English puts all non-English speakers at a disadvantage. While not directly attacking English, plurilingualism attaches the issue of language diversity to a political value—democracy—that is very difficult to contest” (Story of French 351). The authors do not comment on cultural diversity or on the UNESCO’s approval of the Declaration on Cultural Diversity in 2005. Linguistic pluralism allows for the defense and the protection of the French language among other world languages as alternatives to the American English model. Cultural diversity might be viewed as a replacement for the French cultural exception of the 1990s. In response to this reaction, Catherine Trautmann explains the connection between cultural diversity and cultural exception as follows:

The notion of cultural diversity is not a substitute for that of a cultural exception… The notion of ‘cultural exception’ constitutes the means, which in my opinion is non-negotiable, for obtaining the objective of cultural diversity. The new notion is positive; it expresses a determination to preserve all the world’s cultures, and not just our own culture, against the risk of homogenization. (208)
According to Trautmann, cultural diversity is advocating for the preservation of all world cultures, including French and Francophone cultures and their languages against the risk of homogenization. Linguistic pluralism seems to be part of cultural diversity, which stands in sharp contrast with the traditional French policy of assimilation. The French are determined to wage war against homogenization in the world while the OIF is urging for cooperation and tolerance of other languages through cultural diversity.

3.1. The Alliance Française and cultural diversity

The inclusion of Francophone cultures and Francophone management into the realm of the Alliance Française Foundation proves that even a deeply entrenched ideal, such as “l’universalité de la langue française,” must face the realities of a globalized world in the new millennium. The creation of a foundation with Francophone financing and management indicates that the Alliance Française and its network will, henceforth, not only be recognized as French and as a French label, but also representatives of a Francophone foundation for the promotion of French as an international language, French and Francophone cultures, and cultural diversity. In 2004, the Alliance Française Foundation was gearing up in that direction, according to the new president: “[L’Alliance] contribue de manière essentielle à préserver la diversité linguistique et culturelle dans le monde et à favoriser une meilleure compréhension entre les peuples et les cultures” (Launoit 1).

3.2. Francophonie and cultural diversity, from language to culture

As I stated in the previous chapter, the OIF—or institutional francophonie—is a political project that appeals to other nations with its emphasis on cultural linguistic diversity, although it continues to pursue the preservation of French as an international language. As Boutros-Ghali points out regarding the OIF, “La Francophonie a un projet global. Elle contribue tout d’abord à défendre la diversité culturelle et le plurilinguisme” (“La Francophonie Défend Une Vision Humaniste du Monde” 43). According to Wolton, the OIF constitutes a symbol of cultural diversity because it represents diverse cultures and linguistic pluralism, playing a key role to organize cultural diversity provided that cultural identity and linguistic identity are preserved. To accomplish such a task, Francophonie must continue its efforts to counteract the linguistic and political threats posed by the French perception of Americanization.
4. Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the French perceive a form of globalization, which they call “globalization” and “Americanization,” as a linguistic and political threat to the French identity and language. To counteract the domination of American English language and politics, France is turning to cultural diversity to promote linguistic pluralism to fight for an equal standing for French internationally. This approach differs from an endorsement of French as a global language that Nadeau and Barlow advocate.
Chapter 4

Conclusions

This thesis examined the French and Francophone responses to the declining status of the French language. The first major threat took place in the nineteenth century, when Frenchmen realized that other international languages could undermine the privileged position of French as the prevailing language in Western European diplomacy. The second threat resulted from globalization in the twentieth century, as American English gained popularity and strength as the world’s lingua franca in international trade. My analysis focused mainly on the French and Francophone responses to the latter threat.

My position differs from the views held by Nadeau and Barlow, who believe that:
(1) France is not making enough efforts to secure the future French, (2) Francophones are primarily responsible for the survival of the French language, and (3) French is rightfully a global language. I have addressed each of these claims in one of my chapters.

In Chapter One, I analyzed the role that France plays to maintain French as an international language. I demonstrated that France is actively promoting French through the Alliance Française. With the assistance of Francophones, France has established its Alliance Française Foundation for fundraising and modernization of the Alliance satellite centers worldwide. These efforts make evident that France is determined to preserve French as an international language. Thus, France acknowledges that achieving this goal requires a concerted effort beyond the means of a particular nation.

In Chapter Two, I compared my view to that held by Nadeau and Barlow regarding the role of Francophones in securing the future of French as an international language. It is true that Francophones are needed for the international survival of French. However, Francophones could not act completely independently from France since most OIF member countries lack the necessary financial means to support such a task. My position is that the preservation of French as an international language demands cooperation between France and the OIF. The facts indicate that far from being self-sufficient, the OIF largely relies on French monetary contributions. Thus, France is expected to assume political leadership. The relationship between
France and the OIF is mutually beneficial because there is political advantage for all, particularly for France. The OIF uses French financial aid for economic development and educational projects.

In Chapter Three, I argued that, contrary to Nadeau and Barlow’s viewpoint, French is not a global language although it retains the status of an international language. I demonstrated that the form of globalization which the French actually oppose and which they call Americanization is not only linguistic, but also political in nature. The French believe that Americanization is the imposition of American English and American values to ensure domination by the United States as the world power. Americanization is perceived as a threat to the French identity and language. The French realized that the domination of English is irreversible, but they looked for ways to counteract its effects. Nadeau and Barlow carried out their own campaign against the domination of American English by advocating for the status of French as a global language. I provided evidence that supports that, from a linguistic standpoint, French is not a global language. I disagree with Nadeau and Barlow’s assumption that French is a global language. I base my conclusion on linguistic definitions and statistical data, which indicate that English is the first language ever to become the world’s global language. However, I can optimistically say that French will continue to be an international language thanks to the joint efforts made by France and Francophones through the Alliance Française and the OIF. France and the OIF are moving toward linguistic pluralism in an effort to protect French against the domination of English. By endorsing linguistic pluralism, France and the OIF are demanding an equal standing for French at international organizations. At the same time, France and the OIF are pursuing equality at the international level for local and native languages in the Francophone world.
Works Cited


