Hegemonic Aspects of the Institutionalisation of the French Language

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ABSTRACT

KARUNA PHILLIPS: Hegemonic Aspects of the Institutionalisation of the French Language
(Under the direction of Gary Marks)

In a nation based on the principles of assimilation as opposed to integration, ethnic enclaves of minority languages and ever increasing tensions resulting from immigration pose a direct threat to hegemonic cultural values. Following the end of World War Two in particular, France has gone through an aggressively progressive institutionalisation of the French language. The education system, specific legislature and the creation of language-monitoring bodies are all play a role. This trend has maintained a somewhat inverse relationship with increasing supra-national legislation. Part of the reason for this inclination can be explained by the ideology behind the capitalism and democracy systems, namely due to the idea of commoditisation.
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Chapter I: INTRODUCTION

Major language legislation in the area of language policy is evidence, within certain political contexts, of contracts, conflicts and inequalities among languages used within the same territory. J-G Turi

Christina Paulston makes use of the statement to start her article entitled “Language Policies and Language Rights”. The statement would seem self-evident but it sheds light on deeper issues such as territoriality versus personality principles and individual versus collective right. Language often falls under a category of “linguistic human rights” and is therefore equally often considered an individual right. Paradoxically, given that by its very nature language is a collective right, precedence of either the individual over the collective or vice versa is very nearly impossible to judge. Judgements are, however, necessary.

The “major language legislation” that Turi alluded to is by no means difficult to unearth. At the European Union level, there is a convention that deals specifically with the issue of language rights. Adopted in 1950 by the Council of Europe and inspired directly from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights and its Five Protocols is also known as the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. The European Court for Human Right has been derived from the underlying ideals of the convention and the court thereby rules in accordance with the articles and protocols therein. Language discrimination is directly addressed in Article 14:

The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status.
Article 1 of Protocol 12, an additional protocol to the Convention, concerns general discrimination and reiterates the prohibition of language discrimination:

1. The enjoyment of any right set forth by law shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status.

2. No one shall be discriminated against by any public authority on any ground such as those mentioned in paragraph 1.

The ramifications of effective remedy when such anti-discrimination mandate, or indeed any of the Articles laid out in the Convention, is breached are made clear in Article 13 of the Convention:

Everyone whose rights and freedoms as set forth in this Convention are violated shall have effective remedy before a national authority notwithstanding that the violation has been committed by persons acting in an official capacity.

France has infamously refused to even sign Protocol 12. One might are ague that they have good reasons not to do so due to the fact that the protocol is not consistent with State policy concerning minority groups and their languages. In 1999, France signed but has yet to ratify the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the much more explicit European directive concerning language discrimination. One glance at a map of regional languages and variations thereof currently found in France (Appendix I) is elucidating in terms of understanding the French position on the subject. Two examples, one from the far north of the country and the other from the far south, provide clear case studies on a regional level.

*Language is in fact a hegemonic idea. This is primarily true of developed countries with well-established governments. Hegemonic ideas are ones that are usually not questioned on the large scale and are generally taken for granted. Although one often hears the word “hegemony” linked to the United States, it is in fact prevalent in most all hierarchies. Indeed, it is a key element of Marxism. A definition of the word “hegemony”*
from the University of Perdue provides a good illustration of the application of the idea concerning institutions.

HEGEMONY (hegemonic): The processes by which dominant culture maintains its dominant position: for example, the use of institutions to formalize power; the employment of a bureaucracy to make power seem abstract (and, therefore, not attached to any one individual); the inculcation of the populace in the ideals of the hegemonic group through education, advertising, publication, etc.; the mobilization of a police force as well as military personnel to subdue opposition.

Echoing Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci argues that under the ideological hegemony of the ruling class and without a consciousness of their own, the subaltern classes often assume that the present order is both normal and eternal. Ideological hegemony works to reproduce the social order because it naturalizes the status quo. In this case, the French government is interested in creating and maintaining the status quo of French language supremacy.

Expanding upon this idea, Grogry Lukacs defines reification as the tendency of social relationships to take on an objective thing-like quality. An example is easily found in the phenomenon that is commodity creation. The modern market is essentially just a network of individuals. However, the market is often perceived as an object of its own, an independently governed organism that we do not control. Although we are the creators and controllers of the marker, we perceive it as an entity outside of ourselves. Market laws seem comparable to the laws of physics – eternal, external and unchangeable. Reification tends to promote reproduction of the social order because it falsely convinces individuals that they are powerless and the market is outside of their control.

According to Marx and Lukacs, an object has use value if it serves an immediate personal purpose. For example, if one is hungry, then an apple has a certain amount of use value. On the other hand, a commodity is anything that has primarily exchange value. If one is completely full, then an apple is a commodity; a commodity is an object
characterized by its exchange value. In capitalism almost everything has the dual quality
of simultaneously having a use value and an exchange value. In the modern system,
everything becomes a commodity and everything has a price; items are produced and
traded simply for their exchange value.

The commodity form is dehumanised because instead of the commodity being a
direct manifestation of the individual’s time and labour, the product is perceived as
something separate that is governed by external laws. This disembodied commodity is
stripped of the human components and social relations inherent in its creation and is
perceived as simply an inanimate object worth some capital. Conversely, the commodity
form is dehumanising because it leads men to believe that they are pawns in a “pre-
existing and self-sufficient” mechanical system. The world is no longer a network of
organic social relations between men; it is transformed into a foreign system based on the
relation between things.

Currently in France, one can observe the way in which language has increasingly
become a commodity, particularly when it comes to policy creation. Certain languages
have much hirer value than others. Those languages of lesser value have even been
forcefully traded in at times. This essay attempts to illustrate the hegemonic aspects of the
progressive institutionalisation of the French language in France.
Chapter II: ETHNICITY

Now, as “ethnicity” has “taken a seat at the table of republican values,” the deeply rooted intolerance of autochthonous populations resurfaces in public debate (Begag 33). Azouz Begag, a former cabinet minister, argues that French diversity fills “the void left by the hollowness of the myth of equality and the principle of meritocracy” (33). Inability to compromise on this judgment of republican values has created a polarization of the question of the rights of “ethnically diverse” populations and an assimilationist universalism, largely defended by governments of both the mainstream left and the right since the 1970s (Van Eeckhout 28).

The Bretons, those who inhabit Brittany, have a culture and language that is very distinct from that of the French. The Breton people came to what is now France in the 3rd and 5th centuries. The French conquered them in 1488 (Timm 109). Their language was finally recognized as Celtic in the 18th century. This is a different family from the Romance family in which French finds itself.

The French culture and language is a dominating force on these people. There are an estimated 240,000 Breton speakers. Fewer than half of those are “regular” speakers of the language (Broduic 13-14). The language is slowly disappearing because of the influence of the French language. There is one example of the French allowing the Bretons to learn their native language: “a rudimentary legal framework for the teaching of Breton in the state school system was provided by the Deixonne Law of 1951, permitting the teaching of the language as an optional subject, initially outside regular school hours” (Euromosaic, 2007, p. 1?). While it may be seem as a step toward acceptance, it is
important to see the details. Breton has only been added outside regular school hours. This makes it difficult for students of the area to pursue the study of this language. True acceptance would be a bilingual program. The Breton identity and language are fading and this “derives from the negative identity associated with a prolonged period not only of neglect, but of hostility on the part of a state which has been constructed on the basis of a normativity that systematically fails to accommodate any sense of bilingualism that draws upon its internal cultural diversity” (Euromosaic). France is very unwelcome to the idea of bilingual education as can be seen in the monolingual-oriented laws discussed in the first section.

France could show greater acceptance toward Breton and Corsican in supporting bilingual education in regions with a native language other than French. It is unlikely that this change will manifest in the near future. France will most likely continue to maintain a “French only” attitude in the future. Unless France is either willing to approve bilingual education itself, or to grant greater regional authority so the minorities can choose for themselves, Breton and Corsican will disappear. The French culture and language will have erased them through silent and overpowering pressures.

As Williams asks in Fishman's Handbook of Language and Ethnic Identity, "Can one really be Breton… without speaking the language?" Although a people may base their identity on other cultural markers, "there is a profound need for an indigenous language as a means of communicating shared ideas, values, significant experiences, and literature" (268). Although French politicians hold to the ideology that one language should equal one nation and one state, there is no doubt that at least some, if not most, Bretons and Corsicans identify themselves as being either speakers of their regional language and/or members of their particular ethnic group. Despite some Breton and Corsican separatist actions, the French state has, thus far, denied acknowledgement of
these distinct groups. This leaves us wondering; has Paris' disregard caused some to feel they must act aggressively in order for their representatives to acknowledge their presence?

Unfortunately, little data is available to answer this question or other questions regarding Corsican issues. Euromosaic cites this absence of data as significant (Euromosaic 4)—perhaps because France has not been supportive enough of lingual diversity in its départements in order to continually research the number of native speakers. However, it is known that, a century ago, most Corsicans spoke Corsican as their first language but that, by 1960, most spoke French as their first language (Jaffe 42). Currently, of those on the island, only about ten percent speak Corsican as their first language, and less than half have some ability in Corsican (Euromosaic 2.2). This decline in the number of Corsican speakers is alarming for the language's potential longevity especially since Corsican speakers are not teaching Corsican to their children (Jaffe 49).

Perhaps many Corsican parents do not teach their children Corsican because the parents believe Corsican identity will not benefit their children politically or economically. In fact, in order to understand legal proceedings or receive government services, knowledge of French is almost essential. Representation in court and in the Regional Assembly is conducted solely in French; and government documents are written entirely in French. Even though Corsican witnesses or defendants are sometimes allowed to speak Corsican in court if they cannot speak French well, there are neither translations nor interpreters for Corsican speakers. In fact, documents must be in French in order to be admissible to the court (Euromosaic 3.2-3.3). This lack of justice may be a reason why some Corsicans resort to terrorism.
Williams thinks so; he argues, through the internal colonial thesis, that the ethnic revival began during the post-war period in Corsica and elsewhere possibly due to political and economic discrimination:

[The uneven development of capitalism operates through a cultural division of labour to disadvantage the ethnic periphery. Subject peoples can liberate themselves from structural discrimination by adopting nationalist programs to overthrow their hegemonic "colonial" masters... The key issue of such radicalism in Corsica... was whether violence could be deployed as a successful tactic for ethnolinguistic recognition and political reform. (268)]

Typical of colonial masters, the French believed that those who did not know French were not equal to French speakers; an 1880 Army report states, "The young Bretons who do not know how to read, write, or speak French...are promptly civilized" (Jaffe 42). Today, when almost all speak French, the French deny that various ethnic groups within France are true national minorities (Walzer 39). Instead, they are all French; therefore, "Any politician's mention of... a 'Corsican people' is... attacked as betraying the ideal of the Republic" (Bowen 159).

The International Organization of French-Speaking Nations counts more than fifty-five States and governments among its ranks and it exerts sizable international influence concerning its member states. France’s glory has faded in terms of world dominance in the physical, colonial sense of the word but in all that is cultural, whether it be language, food, museums, etc, the country has aggressively pushed forward under many forms of oppression. In order to combat exterior pressures, conformity has been embraced. Insistence on language conformity provides insight into the phenomenon.

France’s government is extremely centralized; approximately a sixth of the population lives in the Parisian region. A Mecca of higher education and economic activity, most French who chose to move to the capital immediately drop their accent. On the other hand, the immigrants have found it increasingly difficult to adequately
acclimatize to standard French usage. Stemming from the traditional marginalisation of immigrants in France and the major role that the public school system plays in the promulgation of correct French, it is not difficult to see why assimilation into mainstream society is easier said than done.
Chapter III: EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

In France, the public school system is responsible for the assimilation of its pupils into French society. One would tend to argue that educational institutions do not per se have a “hidden agenda” but rather facilitate the transmission of certain values/ideologies and furthermore enforce them. One reason to disagree with the term “hidden curriculum” as the design of most educational institutions against their students is because the aforementioned institutions however varied and diverse usually have an agenda that their constituent are aware of. Taking for example Japan, one may safely assume that the Japanese population fully understands why their textbooks fail to provide in depth detail pertaining to the atrocities of World war Two in particular and are not entirely upset with this decision. Another slightly extreme case could be that of the now fallen USSR. Some would argue correctly that Soviet Union educational institutions were indeed one of the major means of indoctrinating propaganda and that the situation with current Russian institutions of the same are only slightly better in this respect. In each case, however, the curriculum is not hidden, although it may be strictly enforced (i.e.: mandatory schooling as is the case with many countries). It is important to strike the “hidden” aspect of the phrase I feel. School are a relatively neutral place for debate because of the acknowledgement of their manipulative function.

Relative neutralism can be compared and contrasted with the institution of the family. The family provides a structure, language being a very key element of the latter. Robert Dreeben argues that school not only physically separates the student from the family (dependence aspect) but also begins a mental process to individualization
(independence aspect). The family that has “customarily provided help, support and sustenance” is heavily contrasted in the classroom. The only adults present in the schooling system are not accessible in terms of “new relationships of dependency” such as the child had with in the family setting. The student is forced to become independent. The sheer size of the classroom in terms of number of students is not conducive to forming these relationships of old maintains Dreeben.

One observes that this transformation from wholly dependent to the more independent individual is a process, not an over night conversion. Children in the early stages of institutionalized education are prone to seek out stronger relationships with their teachers and fellow classmates than a college student in a five hundred-person lecture hall. Take the thesis paper with its “original idea”. For whatever level it may serve as a bench mark for, it is, in fact, a showcase of the success of the independent student as a product of the educational institution.

Independence does not come naturally because the only way of life a child knows is that of family dependence until entering the schooling system. Parents knowingly entrust their children’s development in to the embracement of independence to educational systems. It should be noted here that not all parents conform for different reasons and hence the example of home schooling. In the same light, private and public schools (depending on factors such as location and country) are separately viewed the more or less adept in terms of fostering independence. Such a choice is important to parents because of the comparison between successful schooling and successful occupational employment, the intended logical continuation after school. It is in fact the parents who force this “conformity of independence” upon their child. Through tasks such as homework, the child is expected to work independently even when back amongst the dependent family structure.
Dreeben provides as an example the act of cheating. Cheating, he argues, is a collective effort, a group activity that exists only within the framework of academics. Paradoxically, as he points out, “illegal or immoral acts such as stealing and vandalism”, when carried out in groups do not carry the same type of stigma. Cheating is instead castigation against non-independent mind work “when unaided performance is expected”, as generally confined to the realm of school. The condemnation of cheating may not seem at first to directly correlate with the working world where teamwork is highly valued. Teamwork; however, generally implies the participation of all, not necessarily just the strongest link. Each individual is expected to contribute in some way, though it may not be the same type of contribution. This requires ingrained independent thinking patterns. One may fairly argue that such patterns only exist abnormally outside of the schooling structure. This is to say that individuals who have been processed through the system have a higher tendency to exercise their independence. An example might be the idea of women’s rights in an extremely broad sense. One can clearly see that the increase of women’s general rights (i.e.: voting, birth control, even dress code), has a direct correlation to the increasing levels of the education of women. The same applies to minorities of any group. Quite ironically, the collective action of independent thinking has historically been shown to produce change. Placement into educational institutions is all the more of high value.

It is with this knowledge that the majority of parents entrust the transformation of their children to educational institutions. The agenda of infusing information that is not explicitly taught is by no means hidden; the acknowledged goal is achieving meritocracy. By breaking away from the wholly interdependent family structure through means of school, students are allowed room to foster independent ideas even though the first of these ideas may be provided by the educational system itself. Rebellion as allowed
against the family can latter be turned upon other institutions, including that of education (i.e.: May 1968 in Paris against not only the political but also the educational institutions). This can in fact be taken as a satirical measure of the success of the transformation.

According to Marx, during any given epoch, the ideas of the ruling class are the ruling ideas. It suffices to take the simple but well-known phrase “the winners write history” to see the validity of the idea. A specific historical example of Marx’s assertion can be found in the ideology of the “American Dream”. This ideology states that America is the land of equal opportunity and any individual who works hard enough can make his own fortune, thereby controlling his own destiny. It is not hard to see how the American elite benefits, may it only be by default, from this false ideology since it justifies and naturalizes the status quo. Statistically, the notion of equal opportunity simply does not exist, however, this ruling class idea continues to grow.
Chapter IV: IMMIGRATION

France, although not a nation of immigrants as one might claim of the United States, has a long tradition of allowing foreigners entry. Immigration was generally encouraged to meet labour-force needs and to help with population replacement. Unlike today, immigration was not a subject of heated political debate for many of France’s peak periods of immigration. It was not until after WWII that real political controversy surfaced. France was faced with huge waves of individuals migrating from former French colonies with the ambiguous title of “former” citizens of the French empire.

As French peasants vacated the countryside for work in the large, industrialized cites, immigrant numbers increased from 380,000 to 1.6 million between 1850 and 1913 (Lynch 147). After a lull during WWI, immigrants were once again in demand to repair the war-torn country. Rising in numbers from 1.5 million to 2.7 million between 1921 and 1931, they namely migrated from Indochina and Africa (147). These ten years of post-war healthy economic growth were brutally stunted during the 1930s as acute global depression set in. Policy was initiated to encourage foreigners to leave and, in an about-face, France began for the first time to implement restrictive immigration policy.

Throughout WWII, immigration was virtually non-existent for obvious reasons. When the war ended, however, the numbers soared once more with the necessitation of a large labour-force. The ordinance of October 18, 1945 liberalized the access to French nationality, only further encouraging immigration. Centrally controlling the process, the French state soon found itself unable to keep up with the number of applications flowing in. Illegal immigration was born with only 10 to 30 percent of foreigners thought to be
legal (Lynch 148). Not a one-time occurrence, the economic growth of the 1960s would exemplify the same tendency. During the decade of 1963 to 1973, only an estimated 10 percent of immigrants were legal, “…fostered in part by the government’s willingness to wink at the legal immigration process…” (Lynch 155).

Following the end of the war, an ordinance was passed with the intention of giving the State a monopoly on monitoring the entry and duration stay of foreigners in France. An agency to deal with such decisions was called for and thereby established in 1945. The Office national d’immigration (ONI) was created to generate policy concerning immigration, a position it still currently maintains today. Shortly after its formation, the ONI began to issue residence and work permits that were valid for up to one, two or three year. This method of controlling access to housing and employment has proven a very useful and flexible tool to manipulate the right of entry for immigrants when called for over the years. Currently, immigration policy emphasizes family unification and allows for the entry of immediate family members. Paradoxically, these applicants can be denied ingress if they cannot show proof of satisfactory housing or employment, official documentation of which must be obtained through the French State. Legal admission can therefore be easily restricted at will by setting more stringent adequate housing regulation standards and/or tightly controlling access to work permit distribution.

When the “cartes de séjour”, the standardized form of finite residence permits of either one, three or ten years, usually renewable, were introduced, the immigration of families was favoured from the demographic viewpoint of the State. Spouses, however, were deprived of the right to apply for work permits. In those post-war years, Algerians, members of the European Economic Community and particular West African nations were not required to obtain the permits at all.
Between 1952 and 1972, the passage of the Treaty of Rome in 1958, which founded the principle of freedom of movement and decolonisation, caused an acceleration France-bound immigration. Progressive modernization of the production apparatus in general during this time period was also bilaterally instigating the replacement of a multi-skilled labour force with new, highly-organized labour to carry out individualized, monotonous conveyer-belt type jobs with the intention of increased productivity. Therefore, the mass, untrained labour force present in the immigrant populations was not a hindrance but rather opportunistic in nature. It is indeed ironic that the very opposite is true of the French job market today as she combats steep unemployment rates among the nations, to say nothing of the immigrants.

The immigration of the Sixties introduced diversification concerning the sources of immigration recruitment. A progressive decline of Italian immigration was to the benefit of Spanish immigration; in particularly after the Franco-Spanish Agreement of 1961, while the explosion in Portuguese immigration was due in part to the Free-Portuguese Agreement of 1963. Moroccan revitalization of immigration after the Agreement of 1963 of the same year coupled with the development of Tunisian immigration and an extremely high influx of Algerian immigration proceeding the end of the Algerian war (1954-1962), allowed for large numbers of North African migrants to enter France. In addition to the Maghrebian ex-colonies, the 1960s marked the beginning of sub-Saharan African immigration as well. There was an evident need for more agencies to help deal with associated issues of the increasing numbers of immigrants and in 1966 the Direction de la population et des migrations (DPM) was formed by consolidating the old departments of Work, Public Health and Population. In 1974, however, the government ceased to sponsor such positively orientated policy toward immigration.
Table 2 shows the break down of immigrants residing in France, which includes both “French by acquisition born outside of France and “Foreigners born in France.” The census cannot collect information on the country of birth or nationality of parents, ethnic origins or identification, language or religion, the collection of this information is prohibited by the Commission nationale de l'informatique et des libertés (CNIL), so this table is indicative of the countries which immigrants migrated from when they entered France and does not take into account illegal immigration into the EU.

Immigration policy is clearly linked to the state of the economy in France. At the end of the golden age, the year 1973 marked not only severe economic downturn, but it also correlated with radically restrictive immigration policy. A shift was made from active worker recruitment immigration toward family unification. Penchant tended toward favouring the kin of citizens and immigrants and active labour recruitment stopped with the exception of “...notably mining, construction and agriculture” (Lynch 148).

Right-leaning Valery Giscard d’Estaing was elected President of the Republic in 1974. His governmental policy with regard to immigration was characterized by a successful near halt on all new immigration. Rigorous control of potential entrants and their sojourn in France was coupled with a program that promoted the encouragement of a voluntary return of certain categories of immigrants to their countries of origin with a promise never to return. Offering a meagre monetary recompense amounting to 10,000 francs, the policy was mainly targeted at Algerians. Only approximately 35,000 per year took advantage of the offer and the affect on the total immigrant population overall was minimal.

Again, in the 1980s, the discernable shift concentrated on the assimilation and stabilization of the immigrant population. Sanctions were imposed to combat the illegal
immigration that had been encouraged in part by ad hoc legalization for those individuals that had already established illegitimate residence in France. The border control was given more authority to catch unlawful tourists; those employing illegal immigrants began to face government reprisals in 1982; and a carrot-stick proposal granted illegal immigrants a one-time amnesty in 1981 juxtaposed by potential imprisonment of up to one year to be followed by immediate deportation should the offer not be taken advantage of or refused. A marked growth in the percentage of foreigners of the total population between 1954 and 1975 from 4.6 to 8.9 is contrasted by the year 1990 which saw a decrease from 1982 from 9.9 percent to 9.5 percent (Lynch 157). France no longer has a contemporary need of neither labour-force augmentation nor population replacement aid.

The category of “immigrant” was not proposed until 1989 by a demographer named Michèle Tribalat. It would be adopted in 1990 by the *Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques* (INSEE) and institutionalized by the Haut conseil à l'intégration (HCI) (Brinbaum). Before this point in time, all individuals living in France were categorized as either a foreigner or a citizen. In contemporary French, however, the term *immigré* has morphed to denote a negative connotation. The Table 1 illustrates current policy understanding of the distinction between the terms French citizen, immigrant and foreigner.

By law, immigration is only open to: “...aliens who have special links with France, to some relatives in the process of family reunification, to refugees and to European Community (EC) citizens” (Lynch 150). By no means should the latter be confused with comparably widespread European Union (EU) membership. All other aliens are required to obtain a visa from the French Consulate linked to the location of their declared residency status. If one lives in Los Angeles, for example, it is not permissible to apply in New York City. The stereotypical unfriendly side of French
bureaucracy may perhaps even be epitomized in the inflexible nature of the visa application process.

Once a long-term visa is acquired, the foreigner has two months upon arrival in France to apply for either a resident’s card or a “temporary sojourn card” (*carte de séjour temporaire*). While a resident’s card entitles the owner of it to be gainfully employed, unlike a temporary sojourn card, it is very difficult to procure because of the limited distribution of the card and the associated stipulations. Applicants must be able to prove that they have legally resided in France for a minimum of three years or more, provide corroboration of: adequate lodgings, satisfactory employment, intention to remain in France and sufficient evidence of the ability of assimilate and integrate into French society. Two examples of the latter may be found in the emphasis of an adequate mastery of the French language and the desideratum of a clean criminal record so as not to case a “threat to public order.”

These two examples provide an interesting insight because it is important to recognize the much of French policy toward immigration is driven a sense of fear. Taking the first case of language proficiency as an indication of integration, the French clearly see their language, symbolic of the nation-state, as under attack. Nation-states by Walzer’s (1997) definition are not heterogeneous, and therein lies the constant threat to assimilation. Threats emanate not only from the exterior but from the interior as well.

Of the nation-state *par excellence*, Princeton Professor Michael Walzer maintains, "one imagines France as a homogenous society with a highly distinctive and singular culture" (37). However, it has been the pressure for groups to conform to mainstream French tradition which has so effectively weakened the practice of regional cultures and languages. The French argue, in order to be a citizen of the French state, one ought to be a part of the French nation and speak French. Unfortunately for the Breton and Corsican
nations, a "good" French citizen upholds republicanism, and to be republican is to speak French in public (38). As Walzer states, "The republicans seek to maintain a universal and uniform community of citizens, and they are tolerant of religious and ethnic diversity only so long as it is maintained in private or familial settings—the classic nation-state norm" (40). Thus, unfortunately for Bretons and Corsicans, French republicans cannot tolerate "a nation within a nation" (39).

Therefore, French political tradition is at odds with individual groups who would like to show their individuality in public or to separate from mainstream French society. Bowen in his work, Why the French Don't Like Headscarves: Islam, the State, and Public Space, argues that these individual ethnic groups attempt, "communalism (communautarisme)." Expanding on Walzer's arguments, Bowen specifies that the French state fears individual group identity because "[c]ommunalism threatens the processes of direct communication between the state and citizens that underlie French political philosophy. It separates citizens by valuing their affiliation to communities over the collective participation in the nation" (162).

The current debate over diversity in France is deeply rooted in the traditional republican conception of national identity. Dating back to the French revolution in 1789, this republican definition regards national sovereignty as invested in the members of the nation, all of whom are equal before the law. The republican idea of citizenship has since been adapted to be characterized by universalism, secularism, unitarism, and assimilationism (Hargreaves). Ideal modern universalism entails that no intermediary orders are recognized between the individual and the unitary state of which he or she is a member (Hargreaves). Undeniable cultural differences, particularly in regards to diverse linguistic heritages, create an ideological clash between the exclusive universalism that is so deeply imbedded in the French idea of national identity on one hand, and the linguistic
specificity that is an intrinsic part of cultural identity that supersedes national identity on the other hand. This fundamental contradiction between republican ideals and the values of people of other cultures hence poses a roadblock on the traditional republican path to assimilationism and unitarism.

According to Alec Hargreaves, “the supposed incompatibility of republican values with . . . differences in the treatment [of] ethnically defined groups, has created a void in which, over a long period, everyday acts of racial and ethnic discrimination have gone largely unchecked” (xiv). In contrast to Walzer and Bowen’s fears of the emergence of communalism, however, Hargreaves views communautarisme as neither the product of these differences nor their solution; rather, the conflict surfaces from “the Republic’s failure to live up to its own principles” (xx).

While the French language emerged in literature as a vernacular threat to Latin in 843 A.D., its first political implications arose with King Louis IX’s inhibition of the use of regional languages through royal military control. The rise of royal French paralleled the development of the nation during the sixteenth century: François Ier took strict measures to reinforce the official use of the language in public life in order to strengthen the cohesion of his monarchy. The Ordonnance de Villers-Cotterêts, signed by François Ier in 1539 decreed that all levels of judicial and administrative procedures must be carried out in royal French.

By the 17th century, French had replaced Latin as the language of diplomacy and of European aristocracy. The Treaty of Rastadt of 1714 mandated that French be spoken in nearly all European diplomatic representations. In 1635, Cardinal Richelieu created the Académie française in order to unify the kingdom and to regulate the linguistic purity. The Académie has functioned in the Republics much like the National Endowment for the Arts in its financing and authority; that is to say it can raise an eyebrow in opposition
to the French government. The era of Napoleon I in the 19th century brought an even greater diffusion of the French language through its enforcement in republican schools and administrative offices.

Principally to respond to the threat of Anglicisation, the government established ministerial commissions to govern terminology and neology in 1972. The Bas-Lauriol Law of 1975 rendered French the mandatory language in numerous domains, including commerce (i.e.: publicity, government publications, bills) audiovisual production, and in the workplace.

Finally, on June 25, 1992, French legislature added a new phrase to Article 2 of the Constitution: “the language of the Republic is French” (*Académie française* 2). Founded upon this principle, the proposed Toubon Law of 1994 expanded the reach of the 1975 reforms to new domains. The 1996 decree instituted a new general commission of neology and terminology that requires the approval of the *Académie française* for each term published or employed in the public domain. France recently refused to sign international treaties on the rights of autochthonous minorities and the use of the mother tongue such as the Council of Europe Charter on Minority and Regional Languages. The national government has also made derogations from Article 27 of the Pact of Civil and Political Rights and from Article 30 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, reinforcing the universal use of French.

While these advancements of the single republican language are judicially considered to coincide with the French public’s right to receive and understand information in standard French under Article 15 of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, some have argued that, in light of the native linguistic diversity of France, these laws are in conflict with the European Convention on Human Rights.
Chapter V: LANGUAGE

When questioned in a March 1994 SOFRES (Institut d'études marketing et d'opinion international) survey, 38% of the French participants maintained that the greatest threat to the French language was the poor state of language instruction in schools, and 35% attributed this threat to a lack of vigilance on the part of the French themselves. The latter is of no surprise if one takes into account “the notion of the exceptional and universal nature of French culture.” Language is a major component of culture. Steve Albert contends that “language is not something created by the individual; it is something he enters into the possession of” (Albert 1107). A perceived threat to French is a perceived threat the individual.

With the decline of France as a colonial power, its global linguistic and political influence has diminished. In an extrapolation of Karl Marx’s and Max Weber’s Conflict Theory, a threat to the French language catalyzes a defence mechanism, resulting in linguistic protectionist policies. This allows for intolerant institutions to exist as a form of societal self-preservation. The only intergovernmental organization where French is the sole official language is the International Court of Justice and there is not any promise that it will maintain such an exclusive status in the years to come. The French have much at stake and it is therefore understandable why they should be so guarded.

By no means is the vulnerability of French a new concept and a number of institutions exist to scourg the defilement of it, the oldest of which is l’Académie française. Recently, the Académie has taken on a politically oriented watchdog role. During Lionel Jospin’s government, L’Académie française took a strong anti-feminist
position when it maintained that making trades, functions, ranks or titles multi-gendered, as opposed to singularly male, would institute segregation in 1997. The official statement is that “the use or invention of female forms is not desirable” (*Académie française*, 2007).

Proclaiming that, “English… represents an actual threat to French” on their official website, the peer-elected “immortals” are very careful about what words may be allowed and which call for the invention of a proper French substitute (i.e.: tie-breaker becomes *jeu décisive*, walkman becomes *balandeur*, software becomes *logiciel*). Indeed, in France, using English or even “franglais” represents an abandonment of ones French identity and may be interpreted as cultural elitism (Albert 1166).

In an article entitled *L’Esprit des langues* in Le Monde dated February 24,1994 by Jacques Toubon, then Minister of Culture, stated:

> “Each one of us, however slowly, comes to realize that the use of a foreign language is not innocent. It becomes, in many cases, an instrument of domination, an agent of standardization, a factor of social exclusion and, when one uses it for snobbery, a language of contempt.”

Use of English is only one of the few languages that are considered threatening to French culture by the State. A much more fear provoking menace for the common populace is that of Arabic. The *Académie*, has in fact only approved four Arabic words in a time span that covers nearly four centuries: *alaouite*; name of the current Moroccan royal dynasty, *ayatollah, darbouka*; a type of drum, and *keffieh*; the traditional headdress of Arab men (*Académie française*, 2007). Polemic terms such as “hijab” or “khimar”, referring to a woman’s head or body covering, are instead ignored and have been completely replaced by a French word; in this case, “le voile.” The reason for this is clear in light of the controversy surrounding the wearing of headscarves in public schools that currently challenges the cherished French conception of *laïcité*.

Threats associated with immigrants do not only stem from fear of loss of national identity but also from fears of personal safety. Unemployment and education concerns are
negligible in comparison (Lynch 164-166). Criminality, one of the key determining factors of whether a foreigner may stay in France is criminal record, found in disproportionately high numbers among immigrants. In fact, it is reputed to such an extent that in national polls between 1985 through 1993, 75 percent of those individuals participating in the survey felt that “in areas where there are many immigrants, one doesn’t feel safe” (Lynch 165).

Using police-recorded serious crimes Lynch uses Pierre Tournier’s “La delinquance des étrangers en France: Analyse des statistiques pénales,” to make evaluations concerning crime and immigrants in France. He found that the offending rate for foreigners in France was approximately three to one compared to French citizens in 1991. Drug trafficking has the highest ratio with 9:1 and burglary the lowest at 2:1. Six times more likely to be imprisoned than native-born citizens, immigrants accounted for 33 percent of the prison population in 1993. However, a chart showing the “Percentage of Admissions by Pre-trial Detention and Breakdown of Summary Trials by Offence” of the same year reveals that “the imprisonment rate of immigration may be higher that the suspect rate because some may have incarcerated for immigration offences and not violations of criminal law.” (159-164) The growing power radical political parties such as le Front national, the National Front; a right-wing, radical party still headed by Jean-Maire Le Pen.

The current President Nicolas Sarkozy was the Minister of Interior for France during the riots of 2005. More than a few eyebrows were raised concerning his choice of using the Compagnies républicaines de sécurité (CRS), renowned for their brutality, not only in the state housing projects, les banlieus, but against university students as well. Tactics such as using tear gas, blockading the Sorbonne and then storming it were all too reminiscent of May 1968. His “tough on crime” stance in general has led him be
compared to former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani. The French press has even accused Sarkozy of attempting to mimic Giuliani’s “broken windows” policy, whereby big criminal “fish” are caught by going after minor crimes. They allege that the minister-turned-President has embraced the underlying ideology as a means of cracking down on immigration. Following the unrest during the spring of 2006, he was responsible setting ambitious deportation quotas for illegal immigrants and passing two laws to restrict immigration.

President Sarkozy has again promised stricter immigration policy, to revive the economy and reform the labour market as his main platforms during the French Presidential elections last spring. Within a month of his election, the new President had his Minister of Immigration, Brice Hortefeux, present a bill to the ministers that outlined much more stringent rules for family reunification. The new bill which will regulate the enforcement is currently being debated in the Senate. According to the official French site with a complete listing French immigration policy, a French language examination will be made to assess the “degree of knowledge of the French language” for those individuals living outside of the EU who wish to reunite with family members in France before obtaining a visa to enter. If the individual is found to be lacking, they are required to take “organized linguistic formation” immediately for a maximum of two months. A follow-up certificate dictating this formation will be obligatory for obtaining a visa of long stay and thereby allow for the procedural initiation of family reunification. A binding “Reception and Family Integration Contract” will be created, obliging the parents in particular to take it upon themselves to manage the “good” integration of their recently arrived children. In the event of “non respect”, a judge may determine the children be taken away and suspend family benefits payments (CAF).
While the bill has yet to be completely approved, it is well on its way. President Sarkozy has pledged to promulgate major policies reforms in respect to liberalizing the market and immigration. Unlike the last century, however, they promise to be entirely inversely related.
Chapter VI: TOLERANCE

Tolerance has become one of those highly charged words that one lets loose when attempting to be politically correct. Advocating tolerance seems to be a reasonably safe stance for anyone fearful of the consequences of second or third person reiteration. This does not only include politicians, as it may seem to be implied. In fact, very few individuals take much time to ponder the word and its connotations, an indirect juxtaposition with its frequent use. It is precisely the intangibility of the concept lends itself to usefulness.

John Locke employs the term “human fallibilism” in his views of toleration as applied to civil liberty. As the Occidental mindset is founded on such principles, it is important to address them. It is of significant note that Anglo-Saxon Occidentalism is not the same as its Gallic counterpoint where in the latter philosophers such as Rousseau and his variation of the “social contract” are much more influential. Taking information into account is crucial when looking at Bowen’s assessment of the French headscarf issue for example.

Amy Gutmann maintains in her book, Identities in Democracies, that some identity groups undermine the greater democratic good and that it is difficult to differentiate. She provides the example of Sikh Royal Canadian Mounted Police being allowed to wear their turbans instead of the regulatory Stinson. Magistrates upheld the decision even though it was polemic and contrary to public opinion. Such a decision was reasoned by what one might call “the greater good”. For the Sikhs to be an important enough group to change the policy was at the Canadians discretion.
John Stuart Mill, like Locke, desired social peace because of the history of religious wars that wrecked havoc on societies. Mill took the idea to the next level of individual freedom. This meant an unshackling of social and psychological restrictions. The best way to accomplish this rational autonomy is to be challenged which therefore necessitates toleration of different views; Mill would support near absolute tolerance. Michael Walzer is acquiescent to a point adding that “Surely it is easier to tolerate otherness if we acknowledge the other in ourselves”, however, he also feels that “Postmodern[ism is]… likely to produce increasingly shallow individuals and a radically diminished life” because “If everyone is a stranger, no one is.” One wonders what Locke and Mill would have thought of an absolute trade of individuality for collective concord. As the news reports on a quotidian basis, this concern is far from being even relatively plausible at this point in time though.

The concept of toleration is an infinite spectrum according to Walzer. Dangerously based on moral reasoning, toleration is often a means to other ends rather than being a good in itself. Not only is tolerance paradoxical because “it characterizes as virtuous putting up with things that one believes are wrong” but practicing it would seem to indicate ulterior motives as well. The French foulard case in France as presented by Bowen is a good illustration of this catch-22.

Toleration can in fact be argued as a form of punishment, albeit it be slight. Although one might feel pressed to call the law of March 15, 2004 punitive for political reasons, particularly in France, not many would deny that the laws of 1901 and 1905 most definitely were. An Occidental mindset typically finds the “headscarf ban”, as it has come to be called, a prime example of intolerance toward an identity group. This is a brazen frontal from the point of view of the French. They do not support communautarisme as such would be ludicrous to do in a nation completely based on
assimilation. By leveling the playing field, the French would maintain that they are being tolerant because no particular group, in this case religious, is allowed to have an unfair advantage. Gutmann declares that identity groups are inescapable in democracies while maintaining that such groups “represent who people are, not what they want”. Evidence in Bowen’s book contradicts this idea, however. Several of the interviewees claimed that they had chosen to affiliate themselves with certain groups based on their personal wants.

There is no right answer. Such is the very nature of toleration. It shifts and bends to the will of a given society yet would seem to impede the majority at the same time. It is the Gordian knot that binds societies together. It would not be prudent to unleash a beast. Because of its very versatile nature, toleration should be taken in moderation yet it is hard to say how much is enough. Such is and has been the struggle of society since the time of its conception.
Chapter VII: CAPITALISM

Toleration might be better described as a societal norm. The creation and control of such norms usually lies with a smaller portion of society than one would initially expect. Antonio Gramsci notes that although the successful formation of a functioning society and thereby the State is in fact reliant upon a “historical unity of the ruling classes”. A more concrete idea of moral leadership be taken into account as an inseparable part of the whole (43). Contrary to Hegelian interpretation, Gramsci views history as the driving force behind ideas (44-46) and therefore the ruling class should logically be saturated with the latter. The organization of the ideological structure of the dominate class consists foremost of a “front” – anything which puts out ideas (i.e.: schools, churches, publishing houses, etc.) and functions with the agenda of propagating ideas, strengthening the moral leadership. Interwoven into the daily fabric of the subaltern classes, individual rationalization and psychological validity is offered in an indoctrinated fashion with the intent of organizing the human masses. This indoctrination may be subtle or acknowledged, the latter being exemplified by the education system as discussed earlier. Intellectual and moral leadership of the ruling class over the subaltern groups becomes possible as the latter assents to its own domination and subservience for the common good, natural and only practised theory of organized life. In this way the dominate class maintains its dominance and hence the survival of the current form of State.

Such an example of hegemonic leadership was practised in Europe prior to the Renaissance era. Quite literally, printing presses and school, classic elements of the
“front”, were controlled if not directly owned by the Church. Proof of this domination by a dominant class is exhibited by the fact that the subaltern class came to an oppositional consensus. Gramsci maintains that there must exist: an objective interest, support (active or passive) for this interest, political organization for partial change, political organization for fundamental change (but using old framework/language), political organization for fundamental change (with new framework/language) and finally, autonomy (43-44). When Martin Luther nailed his thesis up in 1515 and prompted the making of a Protestant branch of the Church, he unconsciously followed the progressive steps out lined by Gramsci. The “Spirit of Cleavage” was practically applied.

During the time of Luther, the prevailing structure was that of the Catholic Church. Today, however, it is manifested by the capitalistic system. Capitalism has incubated a “unified structure of consciousness”, resulting in a “lack of convictions” (100). This is to say that there exists a certain element of collectivity in terms of the way in which society operates/functions yet the observation of the same on the part of the individual is not only passive but disconnected as well. Any form of purely individualistic expression that diverts from the tolerated norms is condemned. Lukacs attributes this phenomenon to reification.

Reification is namely manifested in the formation of a commodity structure which “permeat[es] every expression of life” (100). Before the rise of capitalism goods were bartered on the basis of need. An example once brought forth in class was that of a farmer’s market in rural France. Farmers felt free to trade upon conditions of immediate use (i.e.: eggs-butter, butter-flour, but importantly eggs-flour as well). The use-value of each commodity is mutually appreciated. Reification, however, establishes a set use-value to a commodity that additionally attaches a monetary value. Taken one step further as with capitalism, production no longer solely creates use-value, as for instance with the
case of share cropping. Production becomes a means of profit, commodity fetishism in implied. Share croppers themselves were forced to practice subsistence farming. Their landlords, on the other hand, profited from their tenants labour and did not need to undertake the labour-intensive task of farming themselves.

New relationships develop between commodities due to reification yet the direct relationships between the individuals themselves are forgotten. Phantom objectivity, when commodity structure relativity is masked, allows for a sense of separation between man and his labour. Strawberries at the super market become \(€\ 4.99/kg\) without the slightest association with the human involvement implicated in the arrival of the fruit at the store. On the other end of the process, man credits labour power to himself (i.e.: the migrant workers who may have harvested the crop) and by doing so attaches a value to it, regardless if it is recognized as such by another individual or not.

The bourgeois benefit the most from the capitalist system and its tool of reification because they are several levels removed from the lowest level of the process. In this case, the bourgeois does not take the literal meaning of its French origin. Rather, it can be interpreted as “the ruling” versus “the ruled”. One might even go so far as to objectively use “law makers” and constituents. Like the strawberries, the constituents are somewhat disassociated through phantom objectivity. Key to the successful dominance of the ruling class is that they fully exploit this phantom objectivity to the end of creating a “phantom aspect of the law” (102). The law “may not even be fully and adequately knowable” suggests Lukacs (102). The division of labour demonstrates the fundamental idea of creating a new level of distinction for the bourgeois. With each title of specification, they distance themselves further from the bottom echelon. Thus the objectivity of the commodity structure allows men themselves to be commodities, manipulated by the bourgeois through the system of capitalism.
Chapter VII: CONCLUSION

The intent of this paper is by no means meant to be viewed as an attack on capitalism. The phenomenon of labour commodisation that is such a key element behind the success of capitalism has been used to draw a parallel with the commodisation of policies, in this particular case, the progressive institutionalization of the French language. Capitalism and democracy would seem to go hand in hand if one but glances at recent history. The latter as the governmental system can not be separated for the former, the economic system. Therefore, many similarities are propagated between the two systems. Marx's capitalist bourgeois are the law-makers in the democracy model.

France presents an interesting case because it is a very centralised democracy are therein lies the effectiveness of centralist policies that are diffused regionally. As a centrist State, the government constantly faces issues of marginalisation. This marginalisation can be several different levels including physically and ideologically. The influence of the Etat is very easy to evaluate. At the very center of the Parisian snail is were one finds all government buildings. The further that one moves away from the epicenter, the more enclaves of difference are to be found. Immigrant-laden suburbs as briefly touched upon earlier are only one part of a bigger issue. The cases studies of the Bretons and the Corsicans are only two of many. One needs only to refer to the language map (Appendice I) again to realise that even if France may seem homogeneous, it is in fact not. It is no small coincidence that France currently has the highest population of Muslims in the European Union. For a country the find self-identity in being the bastion
of French culture, internal and external threats carry dire consequences pertaining to ideas of self image and worth.

The fact that the prospect of language loss has such close personal ties to the individual makes the issue of the utmost importance. Hegemonic institutions like that of the education system function well with collective support from society. Coupled with the systems of capitalism and democracy, the dominate culture is maintained, developed and enforced with minimal effort required from the individual. For the moment the supply is high but it remains to be seen if the demand will last.
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Table 2:

**Insee, Recensements de la population, 1962-1999**

Note : /// = absence de résultats due à la nature des choses.

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Appendice I

Carte des langues de France

Source : Lexilogo ; http://www.lexilogs.com/france_carte_dialectes.htm
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