

# INTERACTION BETWEEN FRENCH LANGUAGE AND PUBLIC SERVICES OF FRANCE IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 20th CENTURY<sup>1</sup>

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## **Abstract**

The public services play a major role in preserving the status of the French language on the internal plan, in promoting it as a language of international communication, as well as in fostering language and cultural diversity. For better illustration of the interaction between the language and the public services, we will present their role in the preservation and promotion of the French language on the internal and international plan, as well as its terminological enrichment in the second half of the 20th century. *Internally*, the public services properly apply the required decisions for proper and regular use of the French language, pay attention to the increasing of the quality and properly apply the recommended terminologies by the terminology commissions in administrative and legal documents, while maintaining scientific manifestations and publication of publications, commercial posts and advertisements, products, trademarks, as well as on the websites. *Internationally*, the public services consistently promote the French language in relations with the European Union, United Nations and with Francophone countries. They regularly review the bilateral and multilateral agreements, strengthen the translation services, establish a fund for assistance in translating and interpreting international events, and organize language courses. France, as one of the main coordinators of the International Organization of the Francophone, proposes more measures for spreading of the French language in the world by encouraging Francophone scientific staff to participate in various international activities, increasing its presence on the Internet, creating electronic language tools, etc. *With the terminological enrichment*, the French language is modernized and enhanced its use. For this purpose, are created terminology and neology commissions, which in contact with the French Academy, related institutions from the francophone countries and international standardization organizations, encourage the creation of new terms in all areas that are constantly updated and thus directly and positively affected on its status at the international plan.

*Keywords: interaction, French language, public services, France*

## **1. Introduction**

The subject of this research is the interaction between the French language and the public services of France in The second half of the 20th century. These services play a major role in preserving the status of the French language internally and internationally and represent an important segment of the French contemporary linguistic policy regarding the French

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language (Calvet, 1996: 99-111, 1999: 246-270, Николовски, 2002: 53–62). To present the interaction between the French language and the public services of France in this period, we analyzed several administrative decisions concerning the French language (Николовски, 2002: 101-118). For the starting point of the French contemporary linguistic policy regarding the French language, we determine year 1966 when the founding of the *Haut comité pour la défense et l'expansion de la langue française* (Décret n°66-203), the first institution of the modern period in this country whose goal is defense of the language. France, by its founding, portrays a new, systematic dimension with respect to the defense of the French language and establishes a special relationship towards it. According to the manner of operation and functioning of the institutions whose main concern is its defense, we distinguish three periods of French contemporary linguistic policy in relation to the French language, in which there is a continuous relationship between the public services and the French language that indicates the link between language and the state<sup>2</sup>. On the *internal plane*, the public services obligatory must to take into account for the proper usage of the French language and for increasement of its quality. They also must to take into the correct application of the recommended terms by the terminology commissions in the legal and administrative documents, in the advertisements, the products, the trademarks, on the web sites, as well as in the maintenance of scientific manifestations and publishing publications, etc.

The public services on the *International plan*, need to consistently promote the French language in relations with the European Union, United Nations and Francophone countries. They must inspect bilateral and multilateral agreements, strengthen the translation services of the international events, organize language courses and undertake other measures for spreading of the French language in the World (reinforcement of its presence on the Internet, creation of electronic language tools etc.).

The use of French language is being modernized and increased with *terminological enrichment*. Therefore, terminology and neology commissions are created that encourage the creation of new terms and their updating in all areas and thus directly and positively influence its status on the international scene.

## **2. The public services and the application of the French language internally**

Internally, the public services are based on the constitutional principle that French language is the language of the Republic of France « La langue de la République est le français » (Constitution française du 4 octobre 1958, article 2). According to the circular letter of April 1994 (Circulaire du 12 avril 1994), they should ensure the strict application of all administrative decisions concerning the use of the French language, to consistently apply all newly created terms from the terminology commissions and all documents that they will publish not to be contrary to the provisions for the usage of the French language. In addition to this circular letter, by September 1999, another 14 circular letters with similar contents were sent, intended for each ministry separately (Николовски, 2002: 54).

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<sup>2</sup> Based on the functioning of the institutions for the defense of the language, we distinguish three periods of French contemporary linguistic policy regarding the French language such as: 1. 1966 - 1984, the period of operation of the *Haut comité pour la défense et l'expansion de la langue française*, 2. 1984 - 1989, the period of operation of the *Commissariat général de la langue française* and the *Comité consultatif de la langue française*, 3. 1989 - 2001, the period of operation of the Conseil supérieur de la langue française and the *Délégation générale à la langue française et aux langues de France* (Николовски, 2002: 36-46).

And the Law on the Usage of the French Language from year 1994 (La loi n° 94-665 du 4 août 1994 relative à l'emploi de la langue française) defines the obligations of the public services<sup>3</sup>.

Namely, all posts and advertisements posted in public places by legal entities should contain a translation in at least two languages (art. 4), contracts concluded by legal entities to be written in French, except for the exemptions provided by law (art. 5), the manifestations, seminars and congresses to be translated from and in French (art 6), all foreign-language magazines to contain a French summary (art 7), and the use of a foreign expression is prohibited or a term in the trademark of a particular product when the same exists in French language (art. 14). The general feature of this period, inter alia, is the encouragement towards multilingualism (art.4), both internally and externally, through which France is fighting against the global tendency of monolingualism and the superiority of the English language. Although with certain problems, however, the provisions governing public administration in respect of the application of the French language to the internal plan are duly respected (Droit de comprendre, 1999: 55-60 & Rapport au Parlement, 2000: 61-68).

Also, mandatory use and special attention is also required to the French language on the websites (Circulaire du 15 mai 1996, 2. b.) and in the state information systems (Circulaire du 6 mars 1997) is also required. In order to regulate the language in this area, in the period from 1996 to the second half of 1999, we noted the adoption of eight administrative decisions (Николовски, 2002: 54). With the circular letter from 7 October 1999, it is specified that the terms used on the sites should correspond to the terminological lists published in the *Journal officiel* de la République française, and their translation into English is permissible if there is a translation into another foreign language whose choice depends on the purpose and aim of the site. (Circulaire du 7 octobre 1999, 2. 2. 2. Langue). Providing an example and fostering multilingualism on websites only reinforces the position of French public services on a global scale towards the global respect for language and cultural diversity on the Internet.

Regarding the application of the aforementioned provisions in this area, we conducted an analysis of several dozens of sites belonging to the French public services, and we noticed that almost all of them have bilingual French-English language (Николовски, 2002: 55). In the headings intended for French citizens there is no translation into a foreign language. Some research institutions, in addition to French publications, also contain summaries in English, and the sites of certain public services that contain useful information for various partners in the world also have a translation into the language of the country for which the information is intended under Article 6 from the Circular a letter of April 1994 (Николовски, 2002: 55).

In this period of French contemporary linguistic policy regarding the French language, the tendency continues for improvement of the quality of the language of all administrative texts for improvement of the quality of the language of all administrative texts. In that respect, we noticed the adoption of three legal acts<sup>4</sup> that reminds public administration employees of

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<sup>3</sup> Some provisions of this Law are taken from the previous French Language Law 1975 (Loi du 31 décembre 1975 relative à l'emploi de la langue française), that imposes mandatory use of the French language in the public announcement, advertising, as well as prohibition of use of foreign terms or expressions. This Law ceases to be valid with the entry into force of the Law from 1994.

<sup>4</sup>Circulaire du 2 janvier 1993, relative aux règles d'élaboration, de signature et de publication des textes au Journal officiel at à la mise en oeuvre de procédures particulières incombant au Premier ministre; Circulaire du 20 septembre 1994 relative aux règles aux nominations des membres des conseils et des dirigeants des

the proper use of the French language in the compilation of administrative documents so that they can be better understood by the subjects to whom they are referred.

Also, with that purpose is the creating the Orientation Committee for the simplification of the administrative language (Comité d'orientation pour la simplification du langage administratif) (Arrêté du 2 juillet 2001), that is responsible for formulating specific proposals for quality improving of the administrative language, as well as to monitor their specific application by the public administration.

### **3. Public services and the promotion of French language as a language of the international communication**

The public services, in the relations with foreign persons and institutions, must fully respect the rules for the use of the French language in the international affairs (Circulaire du 12 avril 1994, art. 6), but not favoring any foreign language. The French negotiators while concluding international bilateral or multilateral agreements must use the French language, and if there is no possibility for it from the other side, it is permitted the use of the language of the negotiators or at the third language agreed in the first stages of the negotiation. (Circulaire du 30 mai 1997, III-Rédaction et présentation).

Even though, the French language is an official or working language of many international institutions, however, the public service officials face some difficulties in applying it.

In the General Assembly of the United Nations, despite the fact that the French language is one of the official or working languages, the English language confirms its supremacy. In 1992, the number of delegations expressing in English was 74, and in French 31, but in 1999 increase to 95 delegations in English, and fall to 26 delegations in French (*La place de la langue française dans les institutions internationales*, 2000: 4). Most of the official documents are also written first in English, but very often there are problems in the translation sector that leads to delay in the distribution of translated documents in French language. There is the same problem for contacts between most French ministries with the relevant institutions in the United Nations. The permanent French representatives in international organizations, largely, direct their attention to the use and respect of the French language status. They advocate that international officials from other countries must be obliged to know the French language as a one of the working languages, placed francophone heads of certain sectors that have strategic importance for the preservation of the status of the language, allocated funds for starting language courses in many international institutions. They encouraged the appointment of a Language Coordinator at the United Nations Organization, create a Consultative Committee on Language Pluralism (Comité consultatif pour le pluralisme linguistique) of UNESCO etc.

In the institutions of the European Union, French language is also an official and working language (Règlement n° 1 du 15 avril 1958, art. 1er). It can be used during official and informal meetings, in relations with the institutions of the Union, in the contacts with representatives of other Member States whereby the use of the language of the interlocutor's

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établissements publics et entreprises du secteur public: Circulaire du 30 janvier 1997, relative aux règles d'élaboration, de signature et de publication des textes au Journal officiel et à la mise en oeuvre de procédures particulières incombant au Premier ministre, art. 1. 1. 1.

country is permitted, provided that the French official is in charge. The European libraries and documentation centers must give them a special place for editions published in French (*Le Français dans les institutions européennes*, 2000: 4-14).

According to the French Delegation's for the French language from 1999, the most of the working papers sent by the European Council and to the European Commission to the respective French instances are written in English, while those sent by the European Parliament and the European Court, as well as those referring to official meetings, are usually written in French language (Rapport au parlement, 2000: 76-81). However, and in the European Union there is also a stagnation of the French language, especially after the accession of the non-Francophone countries in it. Even in the relations between the Union and the Francophone countries of Africa, communication is used only in English. The Union allows its use even in relations with the French enterprises.

During the presidency, in the second half of 2000, France reacts strongly against the use of only one language and is committed to multilingualism. It reinforces French language translation services in European institutions by organizing language courses for officials from member states and candidate countries for membership in the Union, and trains French translators from EU accession countries. In addition, France launches more actions in favor of multilingualism in new information technology: enhanced translation of European sites into multiple languages, putting into use an automated online translator and interactive online-grammar in French language.

France's ties with French-speaking countries and institutions are also strengthened. In addition, their representatives in the international institutions use the French language at every possible occasion. France is the principal coordinator of all actions aimed at spreading the Francophone in the World. France runs a policy of cooperation with the international francophone organizations, proposes measures, encourages and defines the actions taken to develop the Francophone and the French language (Décret n° 91-1094 du 21 octobre 1991; Décret n° 92-1231 du 24 novembre 1992; Décret n° 93-797 du 16 avril 1993, art. 5, 6, 7). Also, by encouraging of the young scientific staff of the Francophone countries to take part in the work of numerous international institutions and through the establishment of the Fund for Translation and Interpretation Assistance (Fonds d'aide à la traduction et à l'interprétation), the use of in French language increases during the holding of international events held outside France.

The defense of the status and the spread of the French language in the World is also the goal of the Directorate for Cultural Cooperation and French language (Direction de la coopération culturelle et du français) at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which prepares plans and programs for studying of the French language in the World. For that purpose, France is in constant contact with the network of French institutions and centers, with the French alliances, and cooperates with all other institutions in which foreigners from all over the world are educated in France (Arrêté du 25 juillet 2001, art. 5).

#### **4. Terminological Enrichment of the French language**

In order for the French language to preserve its international status, it must be enriched with terms from all areas through which it will have to express the modernity. Enriching the language is one of the features that characterizes French contemporary language policy (Николовски, 2002: 37, 40, 45).

With the creation of the General Commission and the Specialized Committees for terminology and neology, it is encouraged the creation of new terms and it is increased their application in various fields: economy, natural sciences, technology, law, etc<sup>5</sup>.

These commissions contribute for the spreading of the Francophone and the promotion of multilingualism worldwide. These are also in contact with related institutions of the francophone countries working on the equalization of newly created expressions and terms, with the international organizations, as well as with institutions for international standardization (Décret du 3 juillet 1996, art. 1er). The last, eighteenth in a row, Commission for terminology and neology at the Ministry of Youth and Sports was established in March 2001. In every commission, there is a special high-level officer for terminology and neology (Arrêté du 27 mars 2001) and special service responsible for coordinating of all activities from this domain.

In year 2000, the General Commission of terminology and neology, through its specialized committees, performed an audit of all terms, phrases and definitions published in the *Journal officiel* de la République française in the period from 1973 to 1996. The results from the audit are published in a terminological list (Répertoire terminologique, 2000) that covers 3,000 fully audited units.

With the government preparation program for France to entry into the information society, the great outstanding role played the newly created terms in this area, whereby the General Commission for terminology and neology, is required to develop terminological lists of this area in cooperation with the specialized commissions.

Three such lists were issued until year 1999 (*Rapport annuel d'activité*, 1999: 22). In addition, brochures of newly created terms from several areas are issued and are sent free of charge to all departments of public services and related associations whose activity is related to the specific area for which the list is intended. All terms and lists can be downloaded from the website of the General Delegation for French language.

Contacts are deepening in this area with related institutions from the Francophone countries. Through constant contacts, it is possible for experts from several countries to participate in determining the composition of the newly created terminological lists that reduces the possibility of occurrence of terminological differences in the Francophone countries. In year 2000 were organized two meetings of French experts with colleagues from Canada and Belgium in order to define the condition of terminological policy in relation to the French language in those countries (*Rapport au Parlement*, 2000: 86).

As a reaction to the second wave of the feminist movement that began in the 1960s, forms of feminine gender for certain professions or functions are increasingly being used. Therefore, as early as in 1986, the use of a special form in feminine gender in nouns denoting professions, functions, acts or titles (Circulaire du 11 mars 1986) is required in all official documents of the administration. In 1998, women participating in the government sought and increasingly used the form of feminine titles of the minister (*la ministre*), and at the same

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<sup>5</sup> The Decree of 2015 (Décret n° 2015-341 du 25 mars 2015) aims to simplify and modernize the provision for the enrichment of the French language by changing the composition and the name of the General Commission for terminology and neology that becomes the Commission for enrichment of the French language (Commission d'enrichissement de la langue française). The specialized terminology and neology commissions in each ministry become Expert groups (Groupe d'experts).

time began to make the use of that form as a regular voice practice. Therefore, with the circular letter of 1998 (Circulaire du 6 mars 1998) instructs the General Commission for terminology and neology to begin a research that would clarify the problem, by accepting the situation in other Francophone countries.

The survey would be based on previous surveys from 1984 and 1985, carried out by the commission that worked in that period. This came under strong opposition from members of the French Academy (Saint Robert de, 2000: 101).

The General Commission for terminology and neology submitted its report in October 1999 (*Rapport sur la féminisation des noms de métier, fonction, grade ou titre au Premier ministre*) stating that principally, there are no obstacles to the use of the feminine gender of the nouns that denote occupations and professions. On the other side, the Commission opposes the use of the feminine gender in nouns that denote public functions in administrative documents of the public services and considers that there strictly should be observed the rule of neutrality of the functions. Also, it proposes further research on this issue. The same circular letter instructs the National Institute for French Language (Institut national de la langue française) to compile a brochure, to give users instructions in relation to the use of the most appropriate noun forms in the feminine gender. The publication (Becquer et al., 1999) contains the rules for formation of a feminine gender in nouns denoting a public profession, function, rank or title, as well as forms of the masculine gender for the same nouns. It also allows the *une ministre* form. The same circular letter permits the use of the forms of feminine gender, which are widely used: *la secrétaire générale, la directrice, la conseillère*, by the public services.

## 5. Conclusion

Starting from the fact that the public services play a major role in preserving the status of the French language on the internal plan and in the international communication, we tried to show their action in the second half of the 20th century and, therefore, the interaction between the language and the state. At the *national level*, public services properly apply the decisions required and proper use of the French language, pay attention to increasing the quality and properly apply the recommended terminology by terminology commissions in administrative and legal documents, while maintaining scientific events and publishing publications, trade posts and advertisements, products, trademarks, as well as on the websites. Although there are certain problems, however, these provisions are duly respected.

At the *international level*, the public services consistently promote the French language in relations with the European Union, United Nations and Francophone countries. They regularly review the bilateral and multilateral agreements, strengthen the translation services, establish a fund for assistance in translating and interpreting international events, and organize language courses. France, as one of the principal coordinators of the International Organization of the Francophone, proposes more measures for spreading of the French language in the World by encouraging francophone scholars to participate in various international activities, strengthening ties with francophone educational and cultural institutions, increasing its presence on the Internet, creating electronic language tools, etc.

Although the French language is an official or working language in many international institutions, however, some difficulties are encountered in its application (delays of official documents translated into French, the use of English in communication with French ministries or enterprises, as well as with certain francophone countries by the General

Assembly of the United Nations and the European Union). Therefore, France, together with other Francophone countries in Europe and through the International Organization of the Francophone, strongly reacts against monolingualism and advocates multilingualism through the policy of promoting the French language. The French language is modernized and its use enhanced with *the terminological enrichment*. For this purpose are created commissions for terminology and neology, which in contact with the French Academy, related institutions from the Francophone countries and the international standardization organizations, encourage the creation of new terms in all areas that are constantly updated and distributed through brochures, or can be downloaded electronically from the Internet. This has a positive effect on its status on the international plane, also reduces the possibility of occurrence of terminological differences in the Francophone countries and it turns out that France joins the era of modernization and progress. Through the recommendation to use the gender of the nouns of certain professions and public functions in the legal and administrative documents published by the public services, it is once again confirmed that the state monitors the current social conditions and adequately reacts with their use. Through the continued care and fostering of the French language, it is confirmed the interaction between the public services of France and the French language, as well as its contribution to fostering the language and cultural diversity on a global scale.

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