

The French Speaking World

A practical introduction to sociolinguistic issues



Rodney Ball

The French-Speaking World

'This workbook assumes virtually no prior knowledge of linguistics/sociolinguistics and presents a range of lively and up-to-date material in an accessible way.'

Carol Sanders, *Department of Linguistic and International Studies, University of Surrey*

This accessible textbook offers students the opportunity to explore for themselves a wide range of sociolinguistic issues relating to the French language and its role in societies around the world. It is written for undergraduate students who have a sound practical knowledge of French but who have little or no knowledge of linguistics or sociolinguistics. It combines text with practical exercises and discussion questions to stimulate readers to think for themselves and to tackle specific problems.

In **Part one** Rodney Ball looks at the diversity of the French-speaking world and the function of French in particular countries and regions, including Belgium, Canada and Switzerland. He explores its status in relation to other languages and its role in inter-community relations. In **Part two** the focus shifts to individual language features, and among topics explored are regional speech forms, the differences between written and spoken French, the 'social meaning' of different styles and levels of language, and the use of French by immigrants. **Part three** looks at recent developments and controversies affecting the French language, particularly in France itself.

Key features of this book:

- **Informative and comprehensive:** covers a wide range of current issues
- **Practical:** contains a variety of graded exercises and tasks plus an index of terms
- **Topical and contemporary:** deals with current situations and provides up-to-date illustrative material
- **Thought-provoking:** encourages students to reflect and research for themselves

Rodney Ball is a lecturer in French in the School of Modern Languages at Southampton University. He teaches general linguistics and French sociolinguistics, on which he has published a number of articles, and is involved in designing practical language courses.



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EXISTING TITLES:

The French-Speaking World

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LONDON AND NEW YORK

The French-Speaking World

**A practical introduction
to sociolinguistic issues**

• Rodney Ball

ROUTLEDGE



First published 1997
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon,
Oxon, OX14 4RN

Transferred to Digital Printing 2005

Simultaneously published in the USA and
Canada

by Routledge
270 Madison Ave, New York NY 10016

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Typeset in Sabon, Futura, Times and Optima
by Keystroke, Jacaranda Lodge,
Wolverhampton

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writing from the publishers.

*British Library Cataloguing in Publication
Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available
from the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloguing in
Publication Data*

Ball, Rodney, 1940–

The French-Speaking world : a practical
introduction to sociolinguistic issues /
Rodney Ball.

(Routledge language in society : 1)

Includes bibliographical references and
index.

1. French language—Social aspects—
Foreign countries.

2. French language—
Social aspects—France.

3. Sociolinguistics.

I. Title. II. Series.

PC2074.75.B35 1997

306.4'444—dc20

96-43951

ISBN 0-415-12986-9 (hbk)

ISBN 0-415-12987-7 (pbk)

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Acknowledgements

The author wishes to express his appreciation for the support and encouragement received from his fellow contributors to this series, Clare Mar-Molinero and Patrick Stevenson.

The author and publisher gratefully acknowledge permission from the following to quote from copyright material: Böhlau Verlag, Champion-Slatkine, Éditions Albin Michel, Éditions Denoël, Éditions Fleuve Noir, Éditions Hors Collection, Éditions Klincksieck, Éditions Payot, Éditions Reclus, Éditions La Découverte, *L'Express*, *Langage et Société*, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, *Le Monde*, Librairie Plon, *Lire*, Mouton de Gruyter, Multilingual Matters Ltd, Nathan, the *New York Times* Syndication Sales Corporation, Publications de l'Université de Provence, Stanford University Press, Philippe Blanchet, Mathilde Fischer, Vivienne Mela, Raymond Mougeon, Ndiassé Thiam. Extracts from J. de la Guérivière, *Belgique: la revanche des langues*: Copyright © Éditions du Seuil, 1994. Extracts from P. Merle, *Dictionnaire du français branché suivi du guide du français tic et toc* and *Le Déchiros*: Copyright © Éditions du Seuil 1989, 1991 respectively. The extract from B. Seguin and F. Teillard, *Les Céfrans parlent aux Français*: Copyright © Calmann-Lévy, 1996. The extract from M. Richler, *Oh, Canada! Oh Quebec! Requiem for a Divided Country*: Copyright © Mordecai Richler Productions Inc. 1992. Reproduced by permission of the author c/o Rogers, Coleridge & White Ltd, London. The extract from M. Danner, 'Haiti on the Verge': Copyright

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Introduction

THE AIM OF THIS BOOK is to offer students the opportunity to explore for themselves a wide range of sociolinguistic issues relating to the French language. It is intended principally for undergraduate students of French who have a reasonably advanced knowledge of the language, but who may have little or no knowledge of linguistics in general or sociolinguistics in particular. Relevant theoretical concepts are introduced where necessary, but the emphasis throughout is on encouraging readers to think for themselves and to tackle specific problems. To this end, each chapter is punctuated with a series of practical tasks and discussion questions designed to stimulate readers to pursue in greater depth issues raised in the text. Tasks include small-scale activities – working on definitions of concepts, commenting on accounts of particular linguistic situations or interpreting data presented in tabular form – and more wide-ranging reflective exercises – essays, projects, etc.

The book has been written with a typical semester-length course in mind, and it could therefore be worked through as the principal course text. However, although there is a progression within each chapter and through the three parts, it is hoped that the structure of the book is

Introduction



sufficiently flexible to allow it to be used in various ways to suit particular needs. For example, individual parts or chapters could be selected to complement other material, and students or tutors can decide for themselves which tasks to attempt. The tasks are graded in terms of difficulty and time required to tackle them: see 'How to use this book' below.

Part one initially considers the diversity of the 'French-speaking world', raising questions about the validity of this concept. It then focuses more specifically on certain selected countries or regions: readers are invited to investigate and reflect on fundamental 'macro-sociolinguistic' issues concerning the function of the French language within a given society, its status relative to other languages with which it is in contact and its role in inter-community relationships.

Part two aims to encourage readers to explore social and regional variation in French from a 'micro-sociolinguistic' perspective, shifting attention to individual language features, their functions and their significance for speakers. This involves, for example, considering regional speech forms, analysing differences between written and spoken French, investigating the 'social meaning' of different styles and levels of language, or examining the varieties of French used by immigrants. In addition, a link with the previous section is provided by the inclusion of a chapter on the French-based Creoles and their speakers.

Part three focuses on recent developments in the French language and on reactions towards them, particularly in France itself. Exercises illustrating aspects of innovation in vocabulary or grammar are intermingled with analysis of material that sheds light on opinions or attitudes (press excerpts, opinion surveys, etc.). Consideration is given to the fascination and concern generated by current trends, to the prominent role which the State seeks to play in modelling the future of the language, and to the widespread public debates about linguistic matters that have characterized recent years. Hand in hand with this goes an exploration of the conservative tradition of 'defence of the language'.

How to use this book

The tasks and discussion questions are intended to encourage readers to pause and reflect on issues as they go along and to give them the opportunity to pursue particular topics in greater depth. However, it is not necessary to attempt all the activities in order to follow the text.

It is assumed that readers will have access to an academic library and many of the tasks can be tackled only by making use of the resources normally found there. Readers will get most out of the book if they actively seek information and ideas from a wide as possible a range of other sources (e.g. newspapers, television and radio, the Internet). A few of the tasks presuppose contact with native speakers of French, and one or two may best be tackled during a period of residence in a French-speaking country. To help readers decide which tasks to attempt, they have been graded in terms of difficulty and/or the time and resources required:

- a question or task that reinforces specific points in the text, in an excerpt or in a table, inviting the reader to give a quick reaction, a simple explanation or further factual information;
- a question or task relating to a broader issue and requiring reflection in greater depth, a more analytical explanation or a considered personal opinion;
- a question or task that gives the reader an opportunity to undertake an extensive study going beyond what is actually covered in the text – for example, in the form of an essay, an empirical project or a discussion document. Such tasks normally involve further reading or independent investigation.

One or two general ‘■■■-type’ tasks are provided at the end of each chapter (in addition to any others proposed in the course of it). This is to encourage the reader to follow up issues raised by the chapter as a whole.

Also included at the end of each chapter are ‘Further reading’ sections. Completion of many of the exercises will be greatly facilitated by following up the references provided. Only author and publication date are given: other details are to be found in the Bibliography.

Note, finally, that this book is not intended as an introduction to sociolinguistics as such. Where specialized terms and concepts are used that might be new to readers, they are briefly explained or illustrated, and listed at the end of the volume. More information about them, and of course about other general sociolinguistic topics, will be found in the following.

Reference works

- Crystal, D. *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987.
— *An Encyclopedic Dictionary of Language and Languages*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1992.

Introductory textbooks on general sociolinguistics

- Fasold, R. *The Sociolinguistics of Society*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1984.
— *The Sociolinguistics of Language*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1990.
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• • •

Part one

**The position
of French
in the world**

Part one



Le Monde francophone

• Is French a 'world language'?	4
• <i>L'Espace francophone</i>	7
• The francophone movement	15
• <i>Main stages in its development</i>	15
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Chapter 1



Is French a 'world language'?

Here is some information about eight languages:

TABLE 1.1

<i>Language</i>	<i>Native speakers (millions)</i>	<i>Official status in how many countries?</i>	<i>Significant presence on how many continents?</i>	<i>Official or working language of UN?</i>
Chinese	1000	3	1	official
English	350	50	5	official and working
French	70	28	4	official and working
German	100	6	1	neither
Japanese	120	1	1	neither
Portuguese	135	7	2	neither
Russian	150	1	2	official
Spanish	280	20	2	official

Sources: Comrie 1987 (col. 2), Crystal 1987 (col. 2)

- Specify some of the countries referred to in column 2.
- Specify the continents in question in column 3, saying which of the countries are found in which continent.

The languages in Table 1.1 obviously differ greatly in respect of the various parameters. Japanese, for instance, is a 'major language' in the sense that it has a large number of native speakers, and Japan is a world power economically. However, outside Japan itself, the language has no official status and few speakers (other than expatriates). For these reasons, it is unlikely to qualify as a 'world' or 'international' language. English, by contrast, could hardly be denied such a status, given the number of countries where it is used.

- ■ Though it has the smallest number of native speakers, French comes second only to English in terms of the number of countries where it is official. Why is this, do you think?
- ■ Compare French with the other languages and see whether you can draw up a 'league table', in which, presumably, English would come first in terms of overall world importance. Say what criteria you are taking into account, and whether they conflict with one another.

In lists of the world's 'twelve major languages', Arabic, Bengali, Hindustani and Malay are often included as well as the eight in the table. However, Italian, Swahili or Turkish would be unlikely to figure in it.

- Obtain basic data for these languages.
- ■ Then justify their presence (or absence) in lists of the 'top twelve'.

One important factor not included in the table (because even approximate figures are hard to obtain) is the extent to which the various languages are learnt by people who aren't native speakers of them. (See below for estimates of the number of 'second-language speakers' of French.)

- ■ How do you think French would compare with the other languages in this respect?
- ■ Does this affect its position on your league table?

Many people have tried to assess the importance of French. The following are among the characterizations that have been made in recent years:

Le français . . . est, avec l'anglais, la langue la plus importante du monde.

(Muller 1985: 9)

. . . la deuxième langue de grande diffusion après l'anglais.

(Léger 1987: 2)

- ■ Are such descriptions justified by the facts?
- ■ ■ Is it possible to give clear and useful definitions of expressions like 'world language', 'international language' or 'major language'?

THE POSITION OF FRENCH IN THE WORLD

Most of the languages in the table owe their current status and distribution to fairly recent expansionism of one kind or another. Russian and Chinese have expanded overland; English, French, Portuguese and Spanish originated in countries which subsequently acquired extensive possessions overseas.

- ■ Compare these last four languages in respect of the relative prominence (population, economic strength, political importance) of the 'mother' country among the countries where the language is used today. What is distinctive about the position of French?

The status of French in Europe differs in various ways from its status in the wider world. Table 1.2 gives some information about the official languages of the EU. (Note that, in actual day-to-day practice, English and French are the working languages of the EU administration.)

TABLE 1.2

<i>Language</i>	<i>Native speakers in Europe (millions)</i>	<i>Number of European countries where it has official status</i>	<i>EU school pupils studying it as a foreign language (millions)</i>
Danish	5.1	1	<0.1
Dutch	23.1	2	0.2
English	61.4	2	18.1
Finnish	5.1	1	<0.1
French	67.1	5	9.1
German	90.3	6	2.9
Greek	10.1	1	<0.1
Italian	57.7	3	0.2
Portuguese	10.4	1	0.1
Spanish	39.1	1	1.3
Swedish	9.1	1	<0.1

Sources: Rossillon 1995 (col. 2), Stevenson 1995 (col. 4)

- Specify the countries referred to in column 3.
- ■ Make some comparisons between the status and use of French and that of other European languages within Europe and worldwide.

At the height of the Napoleonic period, at a time when France was the most populous and powerful country in Europe, and its culture the continent's most prestigious, a French printer and amateur grammarian made the following observation about the language and its prospects:

La langue française se propage de jour en jour avec tant de rapidité, que l'on peut espérer de la voir bientôt universellement adoptée en Europe.

(D'Hautel 1808)

- ■ ■ What subsequent factors and events made this an inaccurate prediction?

L'Espace francophone

Francophone ('French-speaking') can be used either as an adjective (*un pays francophone, le monde francophone*) or as a noun (*cinquante millions de francophones*). Uses like *un journal francophone* ('French-language newspaper') are quite common, though frowned upon by sticklers for accuracy (on the grounds that newspapers can't speak).

- What language is spoken by each of the following groups?

anglophones, germanophones, hispanophones, lusophones, néerlandophones.

The centre of *le monde francophone* (known more grandly as *l'espace francophone*) is of course *la France métropolitaine*. This comprises mainland France plus offshore islands administered as part of a mainland department (e.g. the Ile de Ré), and also Corsica, which consists of two departments in its own right. Not included in the definition are the distant *départements et territoires d'outre-mer – les DOM-TOM* – which are nevertheless integral parts of the Republic (see Chapter 3 for the difference between them).

- Identify the four DOM and the four TOM. Also the two further overseas dependencies with the intermediate status of *collectivités territoriales*.
- Which of the ten is inhabited only by scientific research workers?

For reasons that should be obvious, it is often convenient and always fashionable to refer to mainland France as *l'Hexagone* (conventional term: *la France continentale*).

- Draw a six-sided map of France, and then translate into (fashionable) French: 'There are fifty-six million French-speakers in France.'

From *francophone* comes the noun *francophonie* (it was coined as long ago as 1880). This looks as though it should mean 'the fact of being a French-speaker' (cf. *francophile/francophilie*). However, it's often not used in this way, referring instead either to 'l'ensemble des pays de langue française' (over forty of them worldwide), or else to the network of organizations linking them.

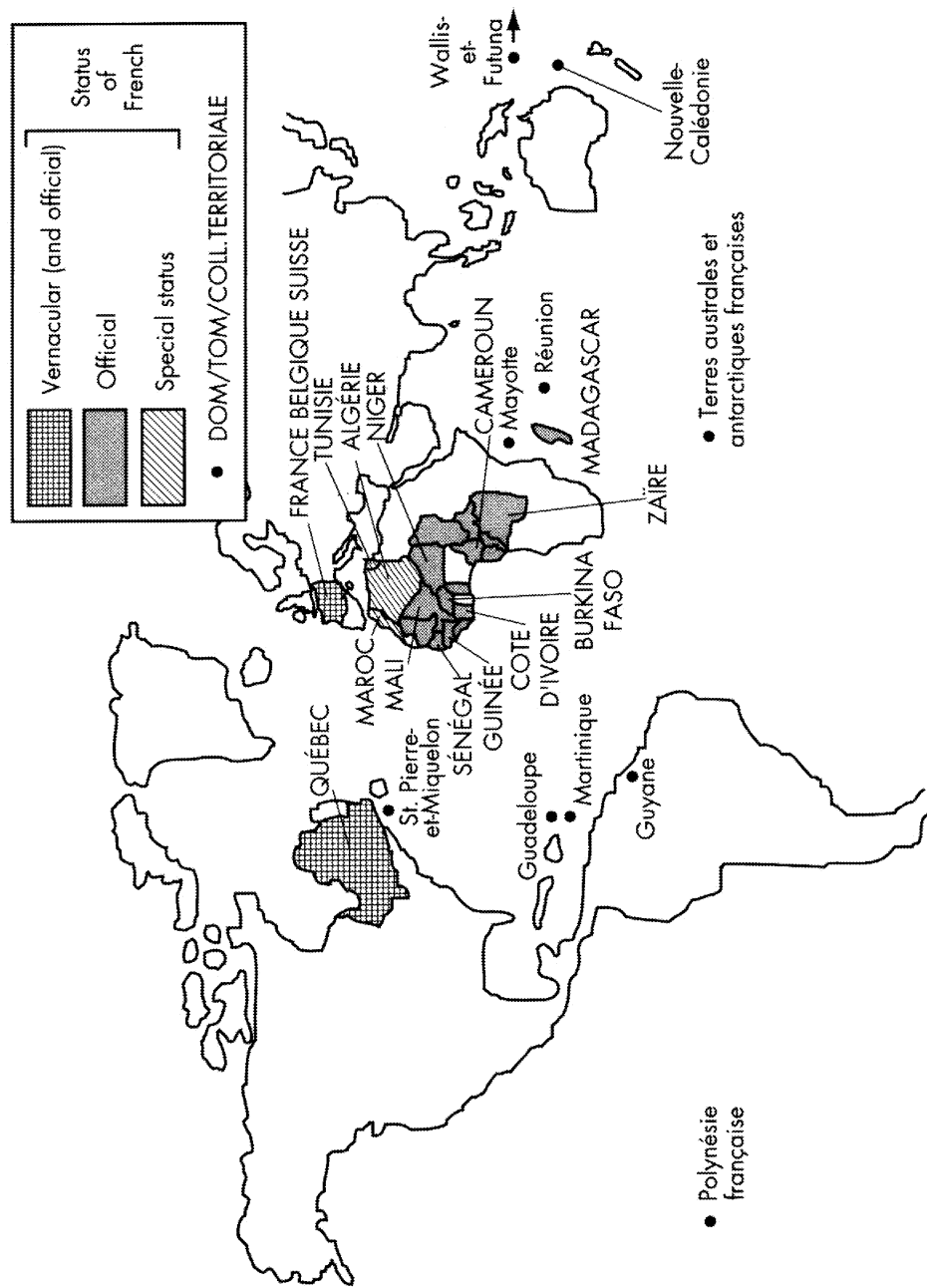
Table 1.3 provides more detail about the sixteen most populous francophone (or partly francophone) countries (see also Map 1.1). In each case, French has one or more of the following kinds of status.

Official (OF). The language (or one of the languages) of government, public services and administration, either at national, regional or local level, or all three.

Vernacular (VN). The mother tongue of some or all of the population. For most people in Britain and France, the official language is also their vernacular. But this is often not the case elsewhere, particularly in Third World countries. Hence the indications +VN or -VN in the table.

Vehicular (VL). Used for everyday non-official communication between groups speaking different vernaculars. The language in question may or may not be the mother tongue of one of these groups. It could be used, for instance, in conversations between customers and stallholders in a market in an African town that is a regional centre. If French-speaking and German-speaking Swiss communicate in English, they are using it as a vehicular language (or, to use alternative terms, a *lingua franca* or a *koine*).

Special status (SP). Sometimes (for example in North Africa) French is in wide use among the educated public, without being either an official or a vernacular language. And special status differs from vehicular status: those using French may well all have the *same* native language (e.g. Arabic). So it's not a matter of facilitating inter-group communication: the purposes for which French is used are intellectual and cultural.



MAP 1.1 French overseas departments and territories; principal francophone states/regions (see Table 1.3)

THE POSITION OF FRENCH IN THE WORLD

TABLE 1.3

<i>Country</i>	<i>Total population (millions)</i>	<i>% of francophones L1 = native speakers (and areas of concentration) L2 = second language speakers, divided when data are available into (a) a higher and (b) a lower level of competence (see p. 13)</i>		<i>Status of French</i>	<i>Other languages and status</i>	<i>*HDI ranking</i>
Algeria	27.9	L2a	30	SP	Arabic OF	85th
		L2b	19		Berber VN	
Belgium	10.1	L1	41	OF	Dutch OF	
		(Wallonia, Brussels)		+VN	German OF	12th
		L2	32			
Burkina Faso	9.8	L2a	4	OF	Mandé VH	169th
		L2b	11	-VN	Dioula VH	
					local vernaculars	
Cameroon	12.8	L2a	13	OF	English OF	127th
		L2b	27	-VN	local vernaculars	
Canada	28.1	L1	25	OF	English OF	1st
		(Quebec, New Brunswick)		+VN	Inuit VN	
		L2	11			
France	58.3	L1	98	OF	Alsatian VN	8th
				+VN	Basque VN	
					Breton VN	
					Catalan VN	
					Corsican VN	
					Flemish VN	
					Occitan VN	
Guinea	6.7	L2a	5	OF	local vernaculars	168th
		L2b	15	-VN		
Ivory Coast	14.2	L2a	14	OF	Dioula VH	145th
		L2b	34	-VN	Baoulé VH	
					local vernaculars	

TABLE 1.3 *continued*

Madagascar	15.2	L2a	9	OF	Malagasy OF	135th
		L2b	6			
Mali	10.7	L2a	5	OF	Bambara VH	172nd
		L2b	5	-VN	Malinke VH	
					local	
					vernaculars	
Morocco	26.8	L2a	15	SP	Arabic OF	117th
		L2b	13			
Niger	9.1	L2a	3	OF	Hausa VH	174th
		L2b	8	-VN	local	
					vernaculars	
Senegal	8.3	L2a	9	OF	Wolof VH	152nd
		L2b	15	-VN	Peul VN	
Switzerland	7.3	L1	18	OF	German OF	13th
		(Fribourg, Geneva, Jura, Neuchâtel, Valais, Vaud)		+VN	Italian OF	
		L2	30		Romansch OF	
Tunisia	8.9	L2a	22	SP	Arabic OF	75th
		L2b	29			
Zaire	44.5	L2a	9	OF	Chiluba VH	143rd
		L2b	30	-VN	Kikongo VH	
					Kiswahili VH	
					Lingala VH	

Sources: Philips Geographical Digest 1996-97 (col. 2), Rossillon 1995 (col. 3), UNDP Human Development Report 1995 (col. 6)

*The Human Development Index is calculated by the UN for 174 countries on a basis of the figures for national income, literacy and life expectancy. It thus gives an overall indication of levels of wealth, education and health.

Figure 1.1 (adapted from Cuq 1991 and Léger 1987) will help you to classify these various countries. The innermost circle is for the ones in which French is the vernacular of at least a substantial part of the population, as well as having official status. The second circle contains former French (or Belgian) colonies in which French is not a vernacular, but is nevertheless the official language or one of the official languages. In the third circle are former colonies where French, though no longer

THE POSITION OF FRENCH IN THE WORLD

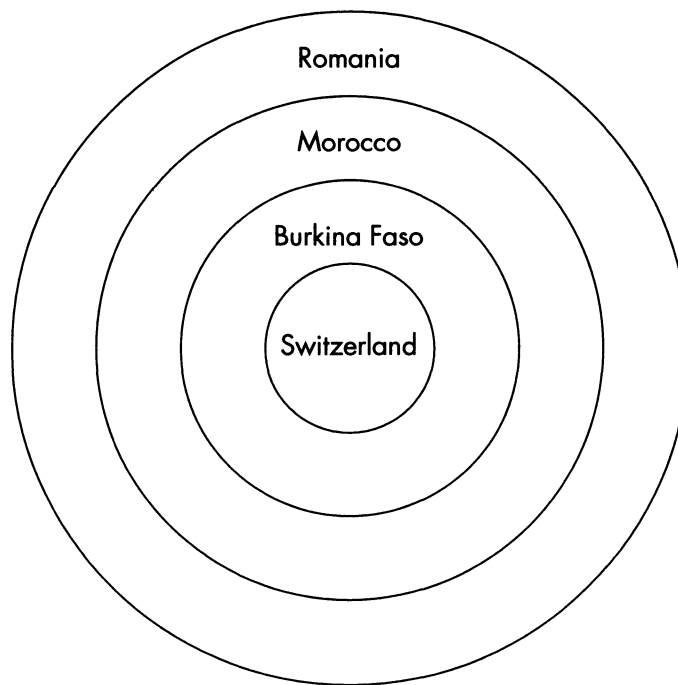


FIGURE 1.1

official, still has special status. Finally, the outer circle relates to countries in which French is much studied as a foreign language, but otherwise has no role in national life. One representative state has been inserted into each circle.

- Insert as many other countries as you can, using their French names.
- ■ Referring again to Table 1.3, why might it be more realistic to refer to '*francophone*' Africa rather than to *francophone* Africa?
- ■ Is it possible to give a definition of *pays francophone* which will fit all sixteen cases in Table 1.3?
- ■ Consider the following countries – Burkina Faso, France, Ivory Coast, Morocco, Senegal and Switzerland – and establish as many points of similarity and difference between them as you can. Take account of the status and use of French, but also consider the

importance and role of other languages, the economic, educational and health levels and the geographical location.

It should be clear by now that there are no countries in which French is a widely used vernacular without also being an official language. Conversely, there are many countries in which, although French is official, it is not widely spoken, and other languages perform the vernacular and vehicular functions. So, as an international language, French seems to owe much more to its status and prestige than it does to the extent of its use.

- Compare French with other languages from the 'top twelve' in this connection.
- ■ What conclusions follow about the position of French in the world, and particularly the Third World?
- ■ ■ Summarize the work you have been doing so far by commenting on the apparent paradox that 'the francophone world is fundamentally multilingual and multicultural'.

If 'francophone country' is a somewhat problematic concept, then it is no less difficult to decide who can properly be described as a 'francophone person'. This term can apply either to someone whose native language is French or to someone one who has learnt French as a second language. But there is no hard and fast rule specifying how competent a non-native learner has to be in order to qualify. An E grade in GCSE French probably wouldn't be regarded as making someone a 'francophone' – but what about a B at A level? Many so-called 'francophones' in Africa are much less proficient than this. In Table 1.3, the subdivision of the L2 category (second-language francophones) is intended to make the term a little less all-embracing, and is based on educational statistics for the various countries. Category (a) covers speakers who have studied French for six or more years at school; into category (b) come those who have studied it for two or more years, but may have had little occasion to use it subsequently, and whose knowledge may be quite rudimentary. Some authorities postulate a category of *francophones réels* or *véritables francophones*, corresponding to the L1 and L2a categories combined, while referring to those in the L2b category as *francophones occasionnels*.

- ■ How far do such sub-categorizations go towards clarifying the situation?

Language statistics and forecasts can vary greatly according to the way in which terms like *francophone* are interpreted. Here are some contrasting predictions about the number of 'francophones' worldwide, and their projected increase (from Chaudenson 1991: 15):

L'édition francophone ... connaît des difficultés de structures plus que de marché; le potentiel de lecteurs reste immense: presque 200 millions (*H de Kerret*).

La francophonie est en constante expansion et en l'an 2000 il y aura 160 millions de francophones (*France-Inter*).

On dit que 300 millions de locuteurs peuvent pratiquer le français (*Libération*).

A ce rythme [i.e. if population growth and expansion of education continue] il y aura dans les premières décennies du XXI^e siècle quelque cinq cent millions de francophones (*Le Point*).

- ■ What differing assumptions might account for these divergent estimates?

The more objectively based projections given in the Bordas *Atlas de la langue française* suggest an increase between 1993 and 2003 of the order of 5.5 per cent in the number of L2a speakers and 1.6 per cent in the number of L2b speakers in Africa, this being the continent where the main increase in L2 speakers is likely. The same source estimates the current world total of francophones (i.e. L1 + L2a + L2b) at 131,400,000.

- ■ How justified do the above estimates and projections seem in the light of this?

Michel Guillou is one of many commentators who distinguish between the growth in absolute terms of the number of francophones and their relative stagnation as compared with other languages:

. . . la pratique de la langue française, son usage comme langue

maternelle ou langue seconde couramment utilisée, sont à la fois en progression et en déclin.

(Guillou 1993: 33)

- ■ Comment on this, making as many comparisons with other languages as you can.

The francophone movement

In recent years a number of international francophone organizations and associations have grown up. Indeed, of the various francophone or partly francophone countries, only Algeria is currently a non-participant in this 'francophone movement'. Moreover, countries like Bulgaria, Egypt, Lebanon and Romania are also involved: though not generally thought of as francophone, they have their own long-standing political or cultural ties with France. Here are some basic items of documentation relating to *la francophonie*.

Main stages in its development

- 1880 The term *francophonie* is coined by the geographer Onésime Reclus.
- 1926 *Association des écrivains de langue française* founded.
- 1950 *Union internationale de journalistes et de la presse de langue française* founded.
- 1961 *Association des Universités partiellement ou entièrement de langue française* founded.
- 1962 Prominent figures like L. S. Senghor and Norodom Sihanouk (heads of state of Senegal and Cambodia respectively) propose a 'French-speaking union'.
- 1965 President Bourguiba of Tunisia calls for a 'French Commonwealth'.
- 1967 First meeting (in Luxembourg) of the *Assemblée internationale des parlementaires de langue française*.
- 1969 First conference (in Niamey, Niger) of francophone states. Outcome: the ACCT (*Association de coopération culturelle et technique*) is founded the following year.

- 1984 Launch of TV5, the international French-language channel. Funded by France, Belgium, Canada-Québec, and Switzerland. The *Haut Conseil de la francophonie* is set up by François Mitterrand.
- 1986 First 'francophone summit' (*Conférence des Chefs d'États et de Gouvernements ayant en commun l'usage du français*) meets at last in Versailles, having been discussed for twenty years. The French government creates the ministerial post of *secrétaire d'État à la francophonie*. The development of scientific and technical terminology is furthered by the founding of RINT (*Réseau international de néologie et de terminologie*), with fifteen member states.
- 1987 Second francophone summit held in Quebec.
- 1989 Third summit in Dakar (Senegal).
- 1991 Fourth summit in Paris: forty-seven teams of delegates attend. Cambodia, Bulgaria and Romania become members.
- 1993 Fifth summit in Mauritius. By now the phrase *ayant en commun l'usage du français* had been replaced by *ayant le français en partage*.
- 1995 Sixth summit in Cotonou (Benin).

Interest in the francophone movement has recently been rekindled in Vietnam, and it is planned to hold the seventh summit in Hanoi in 1997.

- It can be seen from this outline that the francophone movement really got under way only in the 1960s. What do you think was the influence of the political developments occurring at that time (e.g. the independence of the French and Belgian colonies, Gaullist hostility towards the 'Anglo-Saxon' world)?

Popular perceptions of *la francophonie* can be somewhat vague. A recent survey (reported in *L'Année francophone internationale* 1995) revealed that 15 per cent of the French nationals interviewed were unable to name any francophone country other than France itself – 54.2 per cent managed to name Belgium, 23.4 per cent Switzerland, but only 13.9 per cent mentioned Algeria or Senegal. And funding is a perennial problem. According to *Le Monde* (2 December 1995), the overall annual budget of the francophone movement amounts to 420,000,000 F, or just 2 F per inhabitant of each member state. But the organization of the 1995 summit alone cost 200 million francs.

- ■ What problems does this imply for international *francophonie*?

Ideology

Here are various declarations by leading figures which convey something of the ideology of the movement. Underlying them are an emphasis on the world-wide dissemination of the French language, and the belief that there are special links between the language and certain important cultural and political values (an idea forcefully expressed over a century ago by the historian Renan: «La liberté, les droits de l'homme, la fraternité ont pour la première fois dans le monde été proclamés en français»).

Abrégé du monde puisqu'elle comprend tous les continents, toutes les races, toutes les religions, la francophonie tend à l'universalisme (*Xavier Deniau*).

La francophonie, c'est cet humanisme intégral qui se tisse autour de la terre, cette symbiose des énergies dormantes de tous les continents, de toutes les races qui se réveillent à leur chaleur complémentaire . . . Le français nous a séduits de ses mots abstraits et rares dans nos langues maternelles. Chacun des mots est naturellement nimbé d'un halo de sève et de sang. Les mots français rayonnent de mille feux comme des fusées qui éclairent notre nuit (*Léopold Sédar Senghor*).

Car il est vrai que la France a de tout temps labouré avec passion le champ de l'intelligence et offert à la terre entière d'assez précieuses récoltes, il est vrai qu'elle met à la disposition du monde une langue adaptée par excellence au caractère universel de la pensée (*Charles de Gaulle*).

- ■ Focusing on key words such as *universalisme*, *humanisme*, *pensée*, try to characterize the essence of the francophone ideology as it emerges from statements like these.
- ■ How convincing do you find these ideas?

***Some international francophone organizations
and examples of practical measures (1992–93 data)***

ACCT (Agence de coopération culturelle et technique)

- provision of over a million school textbooks and five libraries in Third World francophone countries
- provision of sixty training places (electronics, mechanics, computer science) for nationals of African countries
- extension of European and Canadian television coverage to Africa (TV5 Afrique)
- grants for computerization and publication of legal documents in twelve francophone countries
- organization of a major African cultural festival in Abidjan (Ivory Coast)

AIMF (Association internationale des maires et responsables des capitales et métropoles partiellement ou entièrement de langue française)

- grant (700,000F) for hospital in Brazzaville (Congo)
- similar grants for renovation of two stadia in Burkina Faso
- grant for computerizing municipal accounts in Abidjan
- gifts of reconditioned Lyons dustcarts to municipalities in Tunisia, Niger and the Comoros Islands

AIPLF (Assemblée internationale des parlementaires de langue française)

- various training courses for parliamentary archivists.

The existence of dozens of other associations should also be noted, such as: Associations des écrivains/économistes/historiens/géographes/informaticiens/sociologues de langue française.

Overall, the official analysis of 400 measures taken in 1992–93 shows the following distribution:

Education (including teacher training, buildings, exchanges, etc.)	32%
Culture (festivals, exhibitions, etc.)	23%
Economics (training schemes, industrial or agricultural projects)	17%

Health (hospital building, medical equipment, etc.)	14%
Tourism and Sport	14%

(Source: *État de la francophonie dans le monde: données 1993*)

- The principal value of the francophone movement to date is its contribution to North–South co-operation. In what ways does it carry out such a role?

Perspectives and problems

North–South co-operation is not the only aim envisaged for organized *francophonie*. Consider the following remarks by the diplomat Gilbert Pérol:

[Le français] offre, face à l'anglais dominateur, une alternative. Il est – autant mais plus symboliquement que d'autres, l'espagnol, l'allemand, l'arabe – la langue du refus du monopole anglo-américain. Parce qu'il est là . . . il empêche la vague de l'uniformité de tout submerger. Aussi faible que soit sa position dans certaines parties du monde . . . il est là, borne têtue d'un non-conformisme, d'une non-banalisation, finalement d'une non-soumission. «*Ici commence, le pays de la liberté!*» Dans les réunions internationales où s'égrène l'interminable chapelet des orateurs parlant anglais, il m'a toujours paru – bien sûr, c'est le Français qui perce en moi – que, lorsqu'un intervenant annonçait: «*Je m'exprimerai en français*», il y avait dans l'assistance un imperceptible frémissement qui était celui d'un intérêt relancé, d'une complice et fraternelle attente.

(*Lettre(s)*, January 1993)

Valmy: battlefield in eastern France where the French revolutionary armies defeated the Prussians in 1792.

- ■ Outline the advantages which the writer sees in a strong francophone presence on the world scene. As an anglophone (and perhaps also a citizen of a Commonwealth country), what do you think of his point of view?

Such thoughts were echoed on a more official level at the 1995 francophone summit, when the decision was taken to create a post of *secrétaire*

général de la francophonie (with effect from 1997), the intention being to provide the member states with a spokesperson on political questions, on the model of the Commonwealth's Secretary General. The 'francophone bloc' – so far merely an economic and cultural grouping – will, it is hoped, have a more powerful voice in international politics as a result.

- ■ At the time of the meeting the francophone movement was described as 'l'embêteuse du monde', and the view expressed that 'la francophonie sera subversive ou elle ne sera pas'. Can you explain what was meant?

However, there were doubts about the chances of a meaningful consensus emerging from an association whose 1995 summit was attended by:

Belgium (Kingdom of), Belgium (French Community: Wallonia-Brussels), Benin, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada (Federal), Canada (Quebec-New Brunswick), Cap-Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, France, Gabon, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Ivory Coast, Laos, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Moldavia, Monaco, Morocco, Niger, Ruanda, Romania, Saint-Lucia, Sao-Tomé and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Switzerland, Togo, Tunisia, Vanuatu, Vietnam, Zaire, and (by special invitation) a delegation from the Aosta valley in northern Italy.

- Why did Belgium and Canada each send two delegations?
- Why was the Aosta valley (*Val d'Aoste*) represented?
- ■ Can you sort these states into sub-groupings between which there might be broader divergencies of views or differences of interest?
- ■ ■ It is sometimes claimed that, despite the high-minded rhetoric, the francophone movement provides France with a front behind which she can maintain her hold over former colonies, and obtain more international influence than she really merits. What evidence might there be for or against this view?
- ■ ■ Explore the parallels between the francophone movement and the Commonwealth. Keep in mind such factors as comprehensiveness of

membership, the role of the British monarchy, the relative importance of linguistic, ideological, cultural, political and economic factors.

- What do you think is likely to be the world status of French a century from now?

Further reading

See Asher and Simpson (1994), Bright (1992), Comrie (1987) and Crystal (1987, 1992) for general data about the world's languages, where they are spoken and by how many people. *Quid* (the annual compendium of information published by Laffont) is useful for factual information about particular countries, and so are the *Petit Robert 2* and the proper names section of the *Petit Larousse Illustré*. Ager (1995) provides a detailed survey of current linguistic, political and economic issues in the various francophone countries. See Picoche and Marchello-Nizia (1989) for a more historically oriented account. A concise overview of the franco-phone movement is also provided by Deniau (1992), and Gordon (1978) is informative about its ideological background. Muller (1985), Offord (1990) and Walter (1988) give concise outlines of the position of French around the world; there are more detailed accounts in Chaudenson (1991). An abundance of excellent maps, statistics about language use, and information on education, the media and francophone organizations is to be found in the *Bordas Atlas de la langue française* (Rossillon 1995). Guillou (1993), Léger (1987) and Rossillon (1983) are examples of more polemical approaches. Regular official updates on a variety of topics are published in *État de la francophonie dans le monde* and in *L'Année francophone internationale*.

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