

Main Currents of Modern History (HSS F234)

Self-Study Assignment: Prelim Draft

The Linguistic Consequences of the French Revolution

Aim: To examine the linguistic consequences of the French Revolution by analyzing the relationship between language and nationalism, the resulting linguistic diversity and the changes in the French language

Hypothesis: France had great linguistic diversity, with different dialects spoken in each of its provinces, before the Revolution. France has grown to have one dominant language, with French (earlier spoken by only a handful of people) becoming one of the most spoken languages in the world. Only very few of the original dialects are still actively spoken by locals. I hypothesize that the powerful and elite few in the country's capital exerted their influence to marginalize communities speaking dialects, by uniting the concepts of nationalism and linguistic uniformity. They brought their language to the forefront by oppressing others and thus massacred France's linguistic diversity, whose revival is becoming a focus of the newer generations.

Methods of Study: Books (in part), archives, papers, and articles will be studied including any other sources I may find (videos or websites). I may only study the archives in part (they will be translated through a suitable online software if translations themselves are not found) due to my commitments to other courses and since they have already been studied in the papers mentioned.

Thematic Index:

1. Linguistic diversity in France before the Revolution: The many dialects of France and the status of the French language
2. The French Revolution: Causes, important events and the role of language
3. Bertrand Barère de Vieuzac and Henri Jean-Baptiste Grégoire: Two influential reports on languages (1794)

4. The Aftermath: The Decree of 2 Thermidor, linguistic terror, and new vocabulary
5. Present Status: Surviving languages, *Vergonha*, and the revival of linguistic diversity

Themes	Sources of information	Timeline
Linguistic diversity in France before the Revolution	Ager (1999) ^[4] , <i>L'Ordonnance de Villers-Cotterêts</i> (Articles 110, 111) ^[1] , articles	5 Sep – 12 Sep
The French Revolution	Lefebvre (2001) ^[5]	12 Sep – 20 Sep
Barère and Grégoire	<i>Rapport du Comité de salut public sur les idiomes</i> ^[2] , Gershoy (1927) ^[6] , <i>Rapport sur la nécessité et les moyens d'anéantir les patois et d'universaliser l'usage de la langue française</i> ^[3] , Bell (2000) ^[7]	20 Sep – 3 Oct
The Aftermath	Flaherty (1987) ^[8] , Blakemore (1984) ^[9] ; Ager (1999) ^[4]	3 Oct – 13 Oct
Present Status	Ager (1999) ^[4] , articles	13 Oct – 17 Oct

The remaining days will be spent editing and revising.

Sources:

1. August 25 1539. *L'Ordonnance de Villers-Cotterêts*: Ordinance of Villers-Cotterêts. *Ordonnance Royale*. Accessed online at: https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Ordonnance_de_Villers-Cotter%C3%AAts
2. Barère de Vieuzac, Bertrand. January 27 1794. *Rapport du Comité de salut public sur les idiomes*: Report of the Committee of Public Safety on Idioms. *Le Comité de salut public*. Accessed online at: <http://www.axl.cefan.ulaval.ca/francophonie/barere-rapport.htm>
3. Grégoire, Henri, Jean-Baptiste. June 4 1794. *Rapport sur la nécessité et les moyens d'anéantir les patois et d'universaliser l'usage de la langue française*: Report on the necessity and means to annihilate the patois and to universalize the use of the French language. *La Convention Nationale*. Accessed online at:

https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Rapport_sur_la_n%C3%A9cessit%C3%A9_et_les_moyens_d%E2%80%99an%C3%A9antir_les_patois_et_d%E2%80%99universaliser_l%E2%80%99usage_de_la_langue_fran%C3%A7aise

Studies:

4. Ager, Dennis. 1999. *Identity, Insecurity, and Image: France and Language*. Multilingual Matters
5. Lefebvre, Georges. 2001, *The French Revolution: From Its Origins to 1793, The French Revolution, Volume 1*. Routledge
6. Gershoy, Leo. 1927. “Barère, Champion of Nationalism in the French Revolution”. In *Political Science Quarterly Vol. 42, No. 3, 419 – 430*. The Academy of Political Science
7. Bell, David. 2000. “Tearing Down the Tower of Babel: Grégoire and French Multilingualism”. In *The Abbé Grégoire and his World, International Archives of the History of Ideas, Volume 169, 109 – 128*. Springer Science & Business Media
8. Flaherty, Peter. 1987. “Langue nationale/langue naturelle: The Politics of Linguistic Uniformity during the French Revolution”. In *Historical Reflections Vol. 14, No. 2, 311 – 328*. Berghahn Books
9. Blakemore, Stephen. 1984. “Burke and the Fall of Language: The French Revolution as Linguistic Event”, In *Eighteenth-Century Studies Vol. 17, No. 3, 284 – 307*. The Johns Hopkins University Press