



"Linguicide or Linguistic Suicide?: A Case Study of Indigenous Minority Languages in France"

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¹ **Note that references to the extracts in Appendix 1 will be made throughout the dissertation in the form A1.X, where X is the number of the corresponding French text in Appendix 1.**

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Abstract and Keywords

This paper considers two, frequently opposing, perspectives to describe the decline and death of minority and endangered languages, namely *linguicide* (e.g. Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1995) and *linguistic suicide* (Spolsky, 2004; Beck & Lam, 2008). After critically overviewing the key implications of each perspective, it argues for the consideration of a framework which incorporates both: with *linguicidal* ideologies, internalised by speakers, prompting the changes in language attitudes which motivate their decisions abandon their mother or ancestral tongues. Following this, the case of French indigenous minority languages (or *langues régionales*) is analysed, and attempts are made to identify the salient “active” and “passive” *linguicidal* ideological devices present in the “declared” (Shohamy, 2006) and “perceived” (Bonacina-Pugh, 2012) language policies from France’s history. An analysis of several sources attesting to the “attitude shifts” on the part of speakers (cf. Sallabank, 2007), influenced by these language policies, is also included. The paper ends with an overview of more recent policies that could potentially reverse these negative attitudes, and, thus, perhaps, the effects of *linguistic suicide*.

Keywords: *linguicide*, *linguistic suicide*, minority languages, language policy, France

1. Introduction

"The extinction of an animal in the modern world is almost never because of natural selection: it's because of the actions of man. The extinction of a language, however, still is natural selection. If it dies out, it's because humans no longer need it to communicate. As long as they do, they will..." (David Mitchell's Soapbox, 2010)

"There is thus nothing "natural" in language death. [...] Language death has causes, which can be identified and analysed." (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1995: 84)

While "living language" and "dying language" are terms frequently used both inside and outside of academia, the exact processes in which languages move (or are pushed) from the former state to the latter remain contested.

On some proximal causes of language decline and death there is obvious consensus. Wurm (1991) and Crystal (2014), who attempt to catalogue the aetiology of language death, begin by citing factors which lead to the demise of speakers themselves, including: famine, drought, disease, natural disasters, warfare (whether civil or international) and physical genocide.

Where speakers live, but contact between different varieties leads to linguistic minorities shifting to a majority language, the exact perspective to adopt to explain this phenomenon remains ambiguous, as the opening quotations exemplify. While generally agreed that they do so in response to some external stimulus or pressure (e.g. Sasse, 1992), the question that divides opinion is whether this shift is a *natural* response to these stimuli, or the result of *coercion*. Do speakers willingly commit "linguistic suicide" (Spolsky, 2004; Beck & Lam, 2008) or are they rather the victims of "linguicide" (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1995)?

The current paper will consider these two perspectives of language shift and death, which are often portrayed as competing. It will begin by examining the implications of each; scrutinising, particularly, the question of agency that they purport to address. Following this, a framework which seeks to reconcile both paradigms will be proposed and examined in light of a number of studies of minority language shift conducted in recent years.

The remainder of the paper will then be devoted to analysing one particular case study – that of indigenous minority languages in France. Particular focus will be given to exploring

ideologies evoked by several explicit and implicit language policies from various periods of France's history.

Finally, drawing on data from various studies, consideration will be given to the changing attitudes of French minority language speakers towards their mother (or ancestral) tongues. The extent to which the ideologies underlying the country's language policies may have instilled or reinforced negative attitudes towards these languages, and thus influenced decisions to abandon them, will be contemplated.

2. Murder or Suicide?: Conceptualising Language Death

2.1 Linguistic suicide

Those who espouse the “linguistic suicide” theory hold that minority language speakers make “a conscious decision to stop using their language, or not to pass it on to their children” (Crystal, 2014: 114). Denison (1977: 21), countering assertions that language death occurs due to structural interference by a competing majority language, causing “rule loss”, adopted the term “language suicide”, concluding that:

“...there comes a point when multilingual parents no longer consider it necessary or worthwhile for the future of their children to communicate with them in a low-prestige language variety, and when children are no longer motivated to acquire active competence in a language which is lacking in positive connotations such as youth, modernity, technical skills, material success, education. The languages at the lower end of the prestige scale retreat [sic] from ever increasing areas of their earlier functional domains [...] until *there is nothing left for them appropriately to be used about*. In this sense they may be said to ‘commit suicide’.”

Beck & Lam (2008), studying the language shift of Totonac speakers to Spanish in Mexico, reach a similar conclusion to Denison's. They adopt the term “linguistic suicide” to describe what they perceived to be “deliberate” and “wilful” “choice[s]” on the part of older speakers not to transmit the Totonac language to their descendants (ibid.: 10)². Their interviewees would seem to attest to this notion of “choice”: citing reasons such as embarrassment

² Given the similarity of the terms “language suicide” and “linguistic suicide”, “linguistic suicide” will be used throughout as an amalgamation of Denison's (1977) and Beck & Lam's (2008) terms.

speaking the language around others (ibid.: 11) and (unfounded – see e.g. Sorace [2008]) beliefs that it would adversely disrupt their children’s acquisition of Spanish, which was considered more important in speakers’ eyes (ibid.: 10).

The authors summarise this “choice” to privilege Spanish acquisition for their children over their mother tongue as:

“a purely utilitarian one [...] a purely practical decision [...] between keeping their children in a world of backwardness, poverty, and exclusion, or helping them function in the language of the larger society and, hopefully, giving access to a wider world of opportunities.” (Beck & Lam, 2008: 14)

Such supposed pragmatism on the part of speakers has frequently been advanced as a principle reason for speakers’ committing linguistic suicide (Edwards, 1985: 94). In this view, what May (2003: 99) designates as “resigned language realism”, speakers are said to acknowledge an “economic and linguistic reality” (Joseph, 2014: 125) and to “acquiesce to the ‘march of progress’” (May, 2012: 148). They concede the incompatibility of their language with the demands of the modern, technologically advanced and increasingly globalised world, and consciously embrace one that will lift them and their children out of their metaphorical or physical ghetto (Edwards, 1985: 50, 94-95; cf. Wright, 2016: 214-215).

And, indeed, one must acknowledge that, for many minority language speakers, such demands are not merely abstract in nature. Proficiency in dominant languages – especially English – is frequently required for access to white collar employment and higher education in many countries, and, ultimately, to the global economy (e.g. Park, 2011: 446; Phillipson, 2003: 6-7).

For these reasons, intervention to support minority languages has frequently been scorned. It is often branded as either encroachment on speakers’ rights to exercise agency in their language choice, particularly one that will be to their socioeconomic benefit (e.g. Ladefoged, 1992); as (possibly malicious) attempts to hamper social mobility and maintain the *status quo*, or some form of nostalgic pseudo-reality (Edwards, 1985: 95); or (unnecessary, or even reprehensible) interference with the inevitable, natural process of “social Darwinism” (Beacom, 2018). If minority language speakers are responsible for maintaining their own

languages (Spolsky, 2004: 130-131), and they choose nonetheless to shift to another, is any external involvement really justified?

2.2 Linguicide

Numerous criticisms have been levied against the linguistic suicide perspective. Crawford (1995: 24) for example, contends that such a view “fosters a victim-blaming strategy”, rather than considering the political, social or economic pressures which engender the act. Indeed, as both he (ibid.) and May (2012: 158) emphasise, framing minority language shift as a wilful process fuels the ideology that language maintenance is both futile and inappropriate.

Relatedly, the notion of “choice” (particularly its supposed “voluntary” nature) has been widely debated. According to many, the term “ultimatum” might seem more appropriate: in Fishman’s (1987: 5) dramatic view, minority language speakers are less active agents in their language’s destruction, than they are “lambs” at the mercy of “wolves”. After all, if the sole language of work, school and prayer in the wider society is that of the majority, and if minority languages are not only kept on society’s fringes, but speakers themselves also face persecution for using them, speakers have little option but to incorporate the majority language into many (if not all) domains of their lives (May, 2012: 158; cf. Nettle & Romaine, 2000 cited in Perley, 2002: 203). Indeed, Hough & Skutnabb-Kangas (2015: 116) maintain that even apparently consensual decisions to abandon one’s mother tongue can be revealed to have been “manufactured” by external ideological influences.

This shifting of agency from speakers to some external force which acts, intentionally or unintentionally, to erase a language, underpins the “linguicide” paradigm (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1995; Rudnycky, 1976) - one of several violent metaphors to describe language destruction, including also “linguistic genocide” or “cultural genocide” (e.g. Anders-Baer et al., 2008: 3), “language murder” (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1995: 484) and *glottophagie* (Calvet, 1974). This agent may be structural – e.g. restrictive laws or measures imposed by a state or public institution – or ideological – e.g. stigmatising beliefs reinforced regarding a linguistic variety or its users (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson: 1995: 84).

As Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson underline (ibid.: 83), linguicidal acts necessarily stem from pre-existing “linguicism” towards a particular speech community – a term, similar to racism, denoting “ideologies, structures and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate, and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and immaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of language” (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988: 13).

Ensuing linguicidal attempts can be committed “actively” (or “overtly”) – i.e. with the intention to eradicate the language(s) in question – or “passively” (or “covertly”) – i.e. permitting the language to die (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1995: 85).

2.2.1 “Active” Linguicide

The situation of Kurdish in Turkey is a case in point of “active linguicide”. Hassanpour, Sheyholislami & Skutnabb-Kangas (2012: 12), recounting the rise of the Turkish nation throughout the 20th century, describe three principal linguicidal measures used to annihilate the Kurdish language:

- 1) **“Criminalisation”**: Portraying the use of Kurdish as a threat to national cohesion, and prohibiting its use in both public and private affairs, as well as in the country’s education system.
- 2) **“Dialectisation”**: Denying Kurdish the status of “language” – described by Calvet (1974: 162) as a “simple naming game” which immediately relegates it to a “status of inferiority with respect to *the* language.”
- 3) **“Ruralisation/De-intellectualisation”**: Presenting the language as “uncivilised” or “uncultured” (especially when compared with the “purity” of the national language [cf. Fernandes, 2012: 90]).

These measures were accompanied by various inhumane acts including mass extermination and forced resettlement of Kurdish children, as well as the establishment of boarding schools to erase the language, and physical and legal punishment of those heard speaking it (Fernandes, 2012). Supposed “justification” for these acts lay in the assertion that the Kurdish language and people impeded modernisation, and the formation of a socially and culturally uniform nation under the Turkish language (ibid.). This belief in an inextricable link between language and nation is referred to by Sériot (2013: 270) as “spontaneous linguistics”, and has

motivated many instances of linguicide throughout history (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000: 426-427) – including in France, whose case is considered below.

While such violent acts are not always committed (Rudnycky, 1976: 24), the Kurdish case does reveal two fundamental tenets underpinning alleged cases of linguicide (e.g. Day, 1985; Zwisher, 2018; Escudé, 2013). Monolingualism is perceived as both “normal” and “desirable” and the possibility of bilingualism in a minority language is often ignored, or considered dangerous (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996: 181-185) – views described candidly as “monolingual stupidity” by Skutnabb-Kangas [ibid.: 181] (see Figure 1). Additionally, a “pre-Saussurian” belief in the superiority of some languages over others is held (Calvet, 1974: 170-171).



Figure 1: The Pro-English Only group "US English" equated bilingual education with child abuse in this advertisement it ran in the Los Angeles Times in 1991. (U.S. English, 1991: 355; see also Darder, 2011: 219).

2.2.2 "Passive" Linguicide

With regards less overt forms, Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson (1995: 83-84), draw on Cobarrubias' (1983: 71) taxonomy of governmental attitudes toward minority languages (see Table 1), identifying “letting a language die” and “unsupported co-existence” as potentially passively linguicidal. In other words, officially neglecting a minority language even when endangered, or tolerating its use within a speech community, but delegating its maintenance

entirely to speakers themselves (Cobarrubias, 1983: 72), could be considered linguicidal under this view.

Official Attitudes Towards Minority Languages	
1.	Attempting to kill a language
2.	Letting a language die
3.	Unsupported coexistence
4.	Partial support of specific language functions
5.	Adoption as an official language

Table 1: Cobarrubias' (1983: 71) "taxonomy of official attitudes towards minority languages".

While one might agree with these definitions, one might also argue for their extension to Cobarrubias' (1983: 71) fourth category, "partial support of specific language functions", depending on the functions in question. As mentioned elsewhere (McNulty, 2017a), Grin (2003: 47) argues that successful revitalisation of minority languages requires three key elements: "capacity development", "opportunity creation" and "attitudes improvement" (the latter is discussed below). The former obviously implies the provision of appropriate education to permit fluency in the minority language (ibid.: 45). However, despite the (undeniably essential) requirement for mother-tongue-medium education which many have stressed (e.g. Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1995; Skutnabb-Kangas & Dunbar, 2010; Anders-Baer et al., 2008; Nicholas, 2008), this alone is not sufficient (May, 2012: 149). For languages to thrive, they need to be "taken for granted" in a wide range of social, cultural and linguistic domains or contexts" (ibid.: 101). As Grin (2003: 82) summarises:

"...full exercise of language rights requires the language to be considered appropriate for pleading in a court of law, arguing with a policeman in the street, retrieving information about current affairs in the media, or sealing a business deal."

If languages are marginalised by the state – restricted only to limited, local domains, even when overtly supported or promoted – their vitality may therefore remain threatened, and this could be considered potentially linguicidal.

Relatedly, if a minority language is supported only in cultural domains – that is to say, in areas of less “seriousness” or “status”, such as traditional artistic and musical events (Crystal, 2014: 109) – one might refer to this as “folklorisation” (Fishman, 1987). This could be considered linguicidal in that, as May (2012: 216-217) states, restricting a language to function simply as means of transmitting cultural heritage effectively restricts its functionality in “modern society” and may reinforce the idea that it serves little purpose, hastening eventual language shift.

Thus, “passive linguicide” could be summarised as follows:

- 1) **“Benign neglect”** (e.g. Kymlica & Patten, 2003): allowing a language to die by refusing to provide it any official support (cf. Points 2 or 3 of Cobarrubias’ taxonomy above).
- 2) **“Marginalisation”** (e.g. May, 2012: 162): restricting a language to certain domains unlikely to maintain it.
- 3) **“Folklorisation”** (Fishman, 1987; Oakes, 2017: 373): foregrounding the cultural significance of a language, while denying its use in more “serious” aspects of wider society (Crystal 2014: 109).

Viewing language death solely in terms of consensual and voluntary shifts of minority language speakers to a majority language could therefore be considered myopic given the destructive mechanisms of active and passive linguicide which speakers may face. With an understanding of these forces, speaker agency in language shift and death seems thrown into question.

2.3 An integrated approach

Murder or suicide? Following decades of debate, the choice of the appropriate metaphor remains contested.

While critics of the linguicide perspective remain cognisant of the different linguicidal measures often employed in the past, many argue that it continues to portray speakers as victims in the present (e.g. Perley, 2002: 186). Perley (ibid.: 206-207), for example, maintains that the Maliseet speakers of the Tobique First Nation in Canada whom he studied

were necessarily “exercising their collective will” (ibid.) in choosing another language for themselves and their children: showing little interest even when offered opportunities to learn, and have their children educated in, the Maliseet language. This, he believed, justified the use of the term “suicide” over “linguicide” (ibid.).

It is true that, short of their death or decapacitation, the choice to discontinue speaking a language or to forego its transmission to one’s children must be made by speakers themselves³. Therefore, that speakers do possess agency when shifting to a majority language seems axiomatic – especially when they may “have come to believe that their languages are not worth retaining” [UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages [UNESCO], 2003: 2] or are “actively unhelpful” [May, 2010: 1057] in their daily life. However, it may also be possible to argue that in many cases such agency is illusory. Have speakers really “*come to believe*” in the superfluity of their languages, or have they (and their predecessors) been *influenced* to believe this?

As Crawford (1995: 26) and May (2012: 155) imply, it may be more appropriate to consider “linguistic suicide” and “linguicide” less as opposing perspectives to describe minority language loss than as necessarily co-occurring forces. Indeed, as Edwards (1985: 52) states:

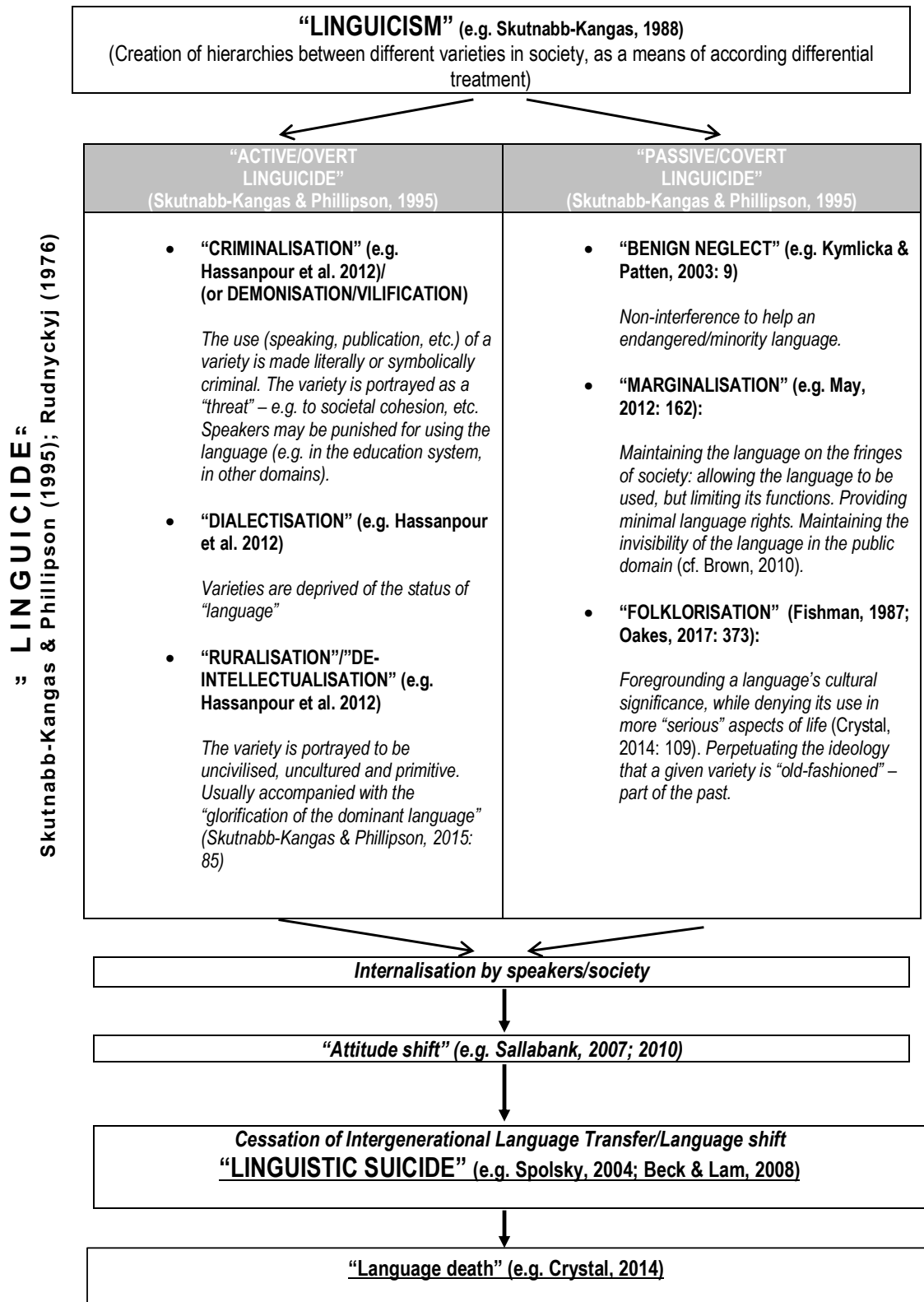
“In linguistic suicide [...] there is *always* a significant other (language) which creates the pressures leading to language shift and decline; there is always a murderer.”

Instead, therefore, these perspectives might be considered as interconnected phases in a larger process (cf. Sasse, 1992: 19), with the former being the ultimate result, and sometimes the objective, of the latter. Building on Skutnabb-Kangas & Philipson’s (1995) assertions, one could argue that *linguicide*, a process rather than an end result *per se*, is *always* achieved through ideological means. Linguicidal discourse and practices may alter the relationship between minority language speakers and their languages and effect (or at least influence) what Sallabank (2010) refers to as an “attitude shift”⁴. The modified view is then transmitted to future generations, leading eventually to a decision to cease intergenerational transmission

³ Except, perhaps, cases such those as where residential schooling is utilised to interrupt acquisition of the mother tongue by minority language children (see Anders-Baer et al., 2008).

⁴ Sallabank (2010: 66) uses this term to denote steady positive changes in attitudes towards endangered languages by speakers, but it could equally be used to refer to the process in which attitudes are negatively modified, under the influence of linguicidal ideologies, leading to a “self-perpetuating downward spiral” (ibid.: 65) ending in linguistic suicide.

and pervading, changed attitudes toward the language on the part of speech community members and their descendants. Linguicidal ideologies, therefore, could be said to create the conditions in which linguistic suicide may occur. An explanatory model of this process, combining the above information, enhanced slightly, is shown in Figure 2.



“LINGUICIDE”
 Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson (1995); Rudnycky (1976)

Alternative terms have been included to broaden the meaning of each category, and also to stress the ideological nature of each measure.

Figure 1: A possible Linguicide-Linguistic Suicide Model, incorporating the measures discussed previously

Following this model, decisions by minority language speakers to abandon their mother tongues, even when their languages are offered some support by the majority (such as the case described by Perley [2002]), would be less surprising, given that they represent the final phase of this linguicide-linguistic suicide process, in which negative attitudes towards their languages have already become “entrenched” (see, e.g. May, 2012: 170).

Though certainly controversial, the effecting of “attitude shift” through linguicide could be likened to a form of prolonged “brainwashing”:

“a systematic processing of non-compliant human beings which, if successful, refashions their very identities [...] [and] change[s] the thoughts of the victims to fit its [the perpetrator’s] preferred ideology” (Taylor, 2006: 9, 97)

Indeed, this term has been used to characterise the linguistic processes that have occurred in various contexts. Gerger (1997, in Fernandes, 2012: 87) likens the Turkish nation-building period to “a permanent indoctrination campaign brainwashing successive generations with the most extreme varieties of nationalistic and racist ideologies” – ideologies which would foster negative attitudes towards Kurdish, and lay the foundations for “attitude shift”. Nkwetisama (2017: 107), too, uses the term to describe the linguistic process in Cameroon, in which, he claims, the false ideology that English and French were part of minority language speakers’ cultural heritage was propagated in order to conceal the actual deconstruction of this heritage. Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson (1995) use the term “colonisation of the mind” to refer to such ideological facets of linguicide, which they believe to apply more to today’s subtler linguistic measures, but which could arguably be applied to both active and passive measures used all throughout history.

The “brainwashing” metaphor is problematic, of course: seemingly stripping minority language speakers of any control over their language choices and portraying them as merely automatons at the mercy of external manipulation (cf. Wright, 2016: 286). This is evidently not the case – speakers’ decisions are most often their own (Joseph, 2004: 23), as is implied by the term “linguistic suicide” (Beck & Lam, 2008).

However, the potential for language policies (to be discussed later) to influence changes in the attitudes of minority language speakers has been attested (e.g. Baker, 1992). As Baker (ibid.: 110) argues, if a language is portrayed as *useful* – i.e. its use is permitted and

encouraged in areas of public life such as in the media, in schools and in business – attitudes towards it may be (or become more) positive. Conversely, as alluded to above, if the language is consistently “positioned” as backward-looking, worthless, or even dangerous – particularly to young people in the education system (Baker, 1992: 110) –, then speakers may become convinced of this, and form negative associations with it – associations which ultimately form the basis of their decisions to abandon it (May, 2010: 1057, 1061; May, 2012: 158).

Thus while “brainwashing” may often be a somewhat inappropriate term, one might conclude that the linguicidal ideologies (present in language policies, for example) are highly *influential* in effecting attitude – and ultimately language – shift.

2.4 Examples

Examples of this view of the linguicide-linguistic suicide process would seem to abound.

Day (1985) explores the demise of the Chamorro language in Guam following American colonisation. Among the linguicidal measures that he identifies include the officialisation of the English language, and simultaneous prohibition of Chamorro in official proceedings and locations, and on school premises (*ibid.*: 174). Additionally, the language was presented as limited, and a restriction to potential progress, compared to English, which was deemed key to social and commercial success (*ibid.*: 175). Subjected to such ideological influences over a prolonged period, the Chamorro people seemed to have internalised the “inferiority” of their language, and when the first Chamorro-led government took power in the late 1960s, the language continued to be repressed officially by its own speakers (*ibid.*) – evidence, perhaps (despite Day’s [*ibid.* 180] arguments to the contrary) of an attitude shift having been effected, leading to linguistic suicide.

A further potential example of such an attitude shift caused by linguicide includes the case of the extinct Pijao language in Columbia (Zwisher, 2018). By means of focus groups, Zwisher (*ibid.*) elicited the attitudes of four generations of the community, revealing that older members remembered some of the language, but felt “a sense of shame” when using it and thus made conscious efforts not to use it with, or transmit it to, others (*ibid.*: 69) – a sentiment

the author posits to be rooted in the (often violent) governmental persecution that speakers faced in the past (ibid.: 74). In addition, several older participants alluded to the belief of younger members of the community that the language was “uncivilised” or “ugly”, compared to their own opinions that they had lost an integral part of their culture (ibid.: 62). This may be indicative of an intergenerational “attitude shift” induced by past linguicide.

Finally, one could also posit that Beck & Lam’s (2008) participants’ “wilful” “choice” to abandon Totonac stem from internalised negative ideologies propagated by past linguicidal policies which aimed at: the “dissolution of indigenous peoples in Mexico and the suppression of their languages” (Hamel, 2008: 302). Indeed, Hamel (ibid.: 310) notes that even current teachers employed to teach bilingually:

“...have interiorized a diglossic ideology, which leaves no room for their languages as the vehicle for the development of academic skills such as literacy or, in a broader context, for the development of their communities.”

Thus the ideology that their languages are inferior is now firmly rooted in the Mexican Indigenous psyche; and even in that of the majority: as Beck & Lam (2008: 12) highlight that the word *naco* in Spanish (deriving from the Spanish word for “Totonac”) has come to mean “simpleton”, and the use of the term *dialecto* is used to refer to the language, indicating pervading beliefs that Totonac is merely a dialect. The linguistic suicide of the Totonac speakers, therefore – and the “agency” of their language shift – must be viewed in the light of this prolonged ideological persecution. While their conclusions may not be entirely unjustified, Beck & Lam’s (ibid.: 5) depiction of the language shifts experienced by Aboriginal peoples as “involuntary” compared with the “voluntary” shifts of the Totonacs, may be somewhat reductive.

In summary, rather than dichotomous perspectives to describe minority language shift, linguicide and linguistic suicide could be considered as two phases of a larger process, involving the propagation and internalisation of linguicidal ideologies which (directly or indirectly) serve to modify minority language speakers’ regard for their own language, and thereby induce language shift through “voluntary” means.

The remainder of this paper will be devoted to examining the proposed linguicide-linguistic suicide model applied to one particular case study – minority languages in France. Given

their role in “creat[ing] language hierarchies, marginaliz[ing] and exclud[ing] groups” (Shohamy, 2006: xvii), language policies, past and present will be analysed to reveal underlying linguicidal ideologies, and the manner in which they have arguably contributed to the decline of indigenous minority languages in France. Subsequently, the extent to which recent policies and discourse reflect a change in official attitudes towards these languages, and their potential to reverse negative attitudes, will be considered.

3. Critical Language Policy

According to Spolsky (2009: 4-5), “language policy” is synonymous with decisions by an influential entity to engage in “language management”: i.e. to attempt to alter language behaviour or attitudes in accordance with an “ideological agenda” (Shohamy, 2006: xviii) (cf. McNulty, 2018: 5). Language policies are therefore the quintessential objects of research for identifying overt or covert attempts at linguicide.

Tollefson (2006: 42) notes that, at the inception of the field of Language Policy and Planning (LPP), language policies were considered primarily for their role in solving linguistic or communication problems, or alternatively as a tool to bolster modernization, foster societal cohesion under a national language, and drive the socioeconomic development of linguistic minorities (see e.g. Haugen, 1966; Fishman, 1968a, b, c).

However, in what Ricento (2000) has referred to as the second and third “phases” of the LPP field (from the 1970s and 80s to present), the ideological detachment and innocuity of language planning was called into question. Authors such as Tollefson (e.g. 1991, 2006) and Shohamy (2006) affirmed that language policies could potentially construct or concretise social or linguistic hierarchies and, as we have seen, contribute to the suppression, modification and eventual dissolution of linguistic minorities. This “critical turn” (Oakes, 2017: 365) has been accompanied by calls to look beyond what is stated in explicit, “declared policies” (ibid.: 50), and to examine *the policies behind the words*: the “de facto” (ibid.) or “perceived policies” (Bonacina-Pugh, 2012: 115) that underlie practices and discourses (both textual and spoken) and reflect the ideological intents of their authors.

Thus, a Critical Language Policy perspective, as advanced by Tollefson (2006) and utilised in numerous studies (e.g. Valencia, 2013; Lawton, 2010; McNulty, 2018), will be adopted. Its objective is to deconstruct and illuminate the various ideologies that compose language policies, both in their explicit and implicit forms, and which contribute to societal inequalities (ibid.). This seems the most appropriate way to identify any linguicidal devices capable of influencing attitude shifts of minority language communities, and ultimately linguistic suicide.

4. Sociolinguistic Context

A country with over 65 million inhabitants (Worldometers, 2018), France recognises only one official language in its Constitution: French (Constitution du 4 octobre 1958, 1958: Art 2).

Despite this, in his report to the Ministries of Education, Culture and Communication and Research and Technology, conducted during the period of France's signing of the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* [ECRML] (Council of Europe, 1992), linguist Bernard Cerquiglini identified 75 other linguistic varieties spoken throughout France's metropolitan and overseas territories (Cerquiglini, 1999). Among these include nine languages and language groups now recognised as *langues régionales* ("regional languages") of mainland France by the French government: Breton, Basque, Catalan, Corsican, Western Flemish, Occitan, Francoprovençal, German dialects of Alsace and Moselle, and the Oil languages⁵ (DGLFLF, 2016). It is primarily on these "regional" varieties that this paper will focus.

Statistics regarding language use and group membership are infrequently published by official statistics agencies in France (Judge, 2007: 67), rendering any assessment of the "health" of its minority languages a difficult task. One study by the *Institut national de la*

⁵ A group of dialects (of which French is a part) that descend from the variety of Latin spoken in northern Gaul (Sibille, 2010: 2; cf. Léonard & Jagueneau, 2013: 284). While often considered only to be dialects of French (Sibille, 2010: 2; Comité consultatif pour la promotion des langues régionales et de la pluralité linguistique interne [CC], 2013 : 15), these varieties are now recognised, significantly, as separate "languages of France" (DGLFLF, 2016: 2).

statistique et des études économiques (INSEE) in 2011, found that 93% of adults born in mainland France were monolingual in French (of whom only 82% were monolingual during childhood), with only 0.6% of the population communicating solely in a regional language (INSEE, 2011 cited in CC, 2013: 12). Furthermore, 75% of adults who spoke a regional language during childhood now speak predominantly in French (with 33% occasionally using their regional language in adulthood) (ibid.).

A previous study also revealed evidence of widespread intergenerational language shift from regional languages to French, revealing that between 65% and 95% (depending on the language in question – see Appendix 2) of 2,085,000 participants whose parents had spoken to them mostly in a *langue régionale* did not do so with their own children (INSEE-INED, 1992, cited in Héran, 1993: 2). Considering that in 1790, approximately half of the country’s population could not speak French (Calvet, 1974: 166), these figures suggest widespread shift and decline of minority languages in France.

4.1 The French Linguicide-Linguistic Suicide Process at a Glance

That the decline of these languages was influenced by various linguicidal language policies has been claimed by numerous authors (e.g. Calvet, 1974; May, 2012; Judge, 2007). Duneton (1999: 14), for example, dismissing assertions that their downfall occurred “naturally”, states that:

“[...] they were not erased as a natural result of the simple and inevitable transformation of a changing society [...] This well-worn party line which clouds the issue, hides the fact that these minority languages were [...] driven out of the country by the Republic. For very specific, thought-out political reasons and with the best of intentions, which have nothing to do with the song of inevitable changes or modernity.” (my translation, **A1.1**)

Jeanjean (2006: 6), indeed refers to these policies as “weapons of mass language destruction” – their use contributing to “France’s interior colonisation” (Jeanjean, 2001).

The attitude shifts provoked by these linguicidal policies are also documented in a number of studies. In their 1971 book, *Main basse sur une île*, the *Front régionaliste corse* provide an account of the decline of the Corsican language. Lecherbonnier (2005: Location 1755) highlights the possible bias on the part of the author: an independence party which he

believes to have instrumentalised the Corsican language to further its “separatist ideology” (ibid.). Nevertheless, the overview given of the changing attitudes towards Corsican on the part of speakers, influenced by French policies, is illuminating:

“This prolonged ‘brainwashing’, this hammering home, this constant, consistent, remorseless politics, spread to every area of daily life, had to bear fruit one day [...] Self-conscious, convinced that their language is worthless, the Corsican people willingly destroy it...” (*Front régionaliste corse*, 1971: 62; 64, my translation, **A1.2**).

Indeed, the account proceeds to describe how Corsican became considered solely a language for use between adults of the same family, village, social class, and sex (ibid.: 63-64). Speaking it to children was considered obscene, and children learned to accept this (ibid.: 63), thus permitting the transmission and internalisation of negative language attitudes to occur.

As McNulty (2017b) highlights, Marley (1991: 53-54) too, whose questionnaire survey concerned attitudes of Catalan speakers in Perpignan, found that many older participants had come to link Catalan with the humiliation to which they were subjected for speaking it at school. They at first neglected to admit to speaking it when asked, believing it to be merely an unrefined dialect (ibid.). For these reasons, many made conscious efforts not to pass it on to their children (ibid.) – thereby committing linguistic suicide. Notably too, the majority of speakers of all ages opined that French Catalan had no future (ibid.: 178).

Finally, Elégoët (1978), a sociologist from Brittany whose work analyses the lives of Breton speakers, conducted a comprehensive biography of the lives of two older inhabitants of Léon (Kuter, 1989: 80) – witnesses to a period in which Breton was much more widespread. In his study, Elégoët (1978: 8) provides a succinct summary of the proposed view of the linguistic-suicide process in Brittany, alluding especially to the process of attitude shift:

“ethnic stratification [...] produces a particular form of social consciousness, namely a negative identity or a negative self-awareness. This negative identity inculcated in the Breton population will lead to deidentification and self-destructive behaviour. Indeed, the generation following these farmers will react violently to the society described here, and the third generation will not even know what it was.” (my translation, **A1.3**)

This paper will now turn to these policies – as well as other governmental documents and political discourse – to identify the linguicidal ideologies present within them that may serve to negatively influence attitudes towards the minority languages of France, exemplified above and, thereby, to spark the process of linguistic suicide.

5. The Emergence of Linguicism

Evidence suggests that, for much of France’s early history, multilingualism was not only tolerated, but received some degree of institutional support in some societal spheres.

For example, in 813AD, the Catholic Council of Reims decided that the priests under its purview, while maintaining Latin for the Ordinary of the Mass, could preach their homilies “secundum proprietatem linguae” (“according to the appropriateness of the language”) (Lodge, 1993: 93). In the same year, the Council of Tours, too, decided that all of its priests should deliver their sermons in “rusticam romanam linguam aut theosticam” (“the rural Romance language or German”) (ibid.)

Furthermore, during the reign of Louis XII in 1510, multilingualism was seemingly enshrined in law through the *Ordonnance de Moulins* (in Isambert, Decrusy & Armet, 1827: 575-603). To prevent lawyers from exploiting their clients’ ignorance of Latin for nefarious purposes (Kibbee, 2017: 6), this *Ordonnance* decreed that all criminal trials and investigations would only be valid if carried out in a vernacular language (Isambert, Decrusy & Armet, 1827: 596).

However, despite this apparent support, Judge (2007) notes the existence of an informal linguistic hierarchy as early as the 12th century. For example, recounting his experience of being ridiculed by the Royal Family for using words from *artois*, the poet Conon de Béthune recalls that:

“The Queen, along with her son the King, acted discourteously, when she criticised me: although my speech is not that of the Ile-de-France, one can still understand me in French. And those who criticised me for using words from Artois, are not courteous or polite, for I was not born in Pontoise.” (Lodge, 1993 cited in Judge, 2007: 14).

Although far from demonstrating linguicidal intentions, one could argue that the monarchy's behaviour evinces language-based discrimination – i.e. linguisticism – which Skutnabb-Kangas and Philipson (1995: 83) have posited to be precursory to linguisticide.

The first legislation to reify this implicit linguisticism has been identified by many as the *Ordonnance de Villers-Cotterêts* (1539) (e.g. Judge, 2007; Escudé, 2013; May, 2012: 166), which stipulated that all legal matters “be pronounced, recorded and delivered to parties in French mother tongue and not otherwise” (*Ordonnance de Villers-Cotterêts*, 1539: Art. 111, my translation, **A1.4**). Clearly “and not otherwise” implies the prohibition of using certain languages over others, which, as evidenced in Article 110, includes the proscription of Latin, echoing the *Ordonnance de Moulins*. The wording “French mother tongue”, however, remains open to interpretation.

On one hand, many studies have concluded that this refers to *the French language*, thereby imposing, for the first time, a monolingual administration (e.g. Lodge, 1993; Escudé, 2013; Calvet, 1987: 70). French would thus effectively become the country's sole *de facto* “official” language; this law consequently serving, albeit indirectly through its suppression of Latin, as the first “thorn in the side of the RLs [regional languages]” (Judge, 2007: 17). Others have interpreted this article more widely, understanding it to mean “*a* French language”, implying that the law intended to replace Latin with the use of *any* indigenous language of France (including, but not limited to, French) (e.g. Alain Decaux in *Images de Picardie*, 1989; Peyre, 1933: 64; cf. European Observatory for Plurilingualism, 2017).

Whatever its intended interpretation, the *Ordonnance* remains in effect today, and has occasionally been invoked to justify the obligation to use French in legal matters. For example, the *Ordonnance* was cited in a case in 1859 to declare null and void a legal text that had been written in Corsican (*Cour de Cassation*, 1859 cited in Judge, 2007: 31). In 2014, too, it was cited to rule the inadmissibility of evidence not presented in French in one case brought before the *Cour de Cassation* (*Cour de Cassation Chambre Sociale*, 2014). The effect of the *Ordonnance* was, therefore, certainly to confer status upon the French language, paving the way to its future glorification and suppression of other varieties (see Section 6).

Thus, during the *Ancien Régime*, a previously implicit linguistic hierarchy had become more concretised. Supplanting Latin in the legal sphere, French had effectively become the

country's sole "official", administrative language, while the other vernaculars of France were subordinated to a position of lesser status and prestige. During the period of the French Revolution, however, these languages would be repressed more overtly.

6. Active Linguicide

Even if the *Ordonnance de Villers-Cotterêts* was intended to mandate the use of French in all administrative domains, its effects on the general population would be limited (Judge, 2007: 20). As Giacomo (1975: 15) notes, knowledge of French was symbolic of socioeconomic affluence, given that French-language education was available only to those who could afford it. Thus, high-status roles requiring competency in French would effectively be closed to the "popular masses", who would rely on the aristocracy to act as intermediaries in their communication with the central government (ibid.)

It was this societal inequality that the *Convention nationale*, the first Revolutionary government, wished to change (cf. McNulty, 2017a). The French language, previously reserved for the King and the privileged classes, was to become that of an awakened populace, liberated from the bonds of tyranny and united socially and linguistically (*Convention nationale*, 1794). While monolingualism represented freedom, however, the maintenance of linguistic diversity represented subjugation and division in the eyes of the revolutionaries (Barère, 1794: 10-11). Therefore, in order to create a unified nation of equals, France's other linguistic varieties – the "impure source of feudalism" and "language[s] of slaves" – had to be quashed (*Convention nationale*, 1794: 2-3). Such a "monoglot ideology" (Blommaert, 2006: 244, drawing on Silverstein, 1996) served as the impetus for what could be called France's period of active linguicide.

The term "active linguicide" must, of course, be understood within the context of the French Revolution, and the Enlightenment ideals on which it was based. Sériot (1997; 2013) (see also Joseph, 2016) notes the philosophical opposition between Romantic and Jacobin notions of "nation" and "civilisation". For the German Romantics, the "nation" was an ethnic phenomenon, pre-existing the state itself, and emerging from a common language and traditional culture of a people (Sériot, 2013: 258). Jacobinism, however, viewed the nation as the *product* of political intervention - of the spreading of the "civilised" Parisian culture,

previously enjoyed only by the French aristocracy (as mentioned above), to every corner of the state (ibid.). Thus, it became the personal responsibility of every citizen to gain a command of the new national language (Ricken, 1994: 197). A consequence of the imposition of a common culture was, therefore, the belief that traditional cultures and speech were merely symbolic of ignorance and of a need for civilisation, as well as a source of political, in addition to linguistic, division (ibid.).

Discussion of conscious attempts to destroy the language of a smaller ethnocultural group – which "active linguicide", a relatively recent term, suggests (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1995) – may seem anachronistic, since such recognition of minorities determined by language was incompatible with Jacobin philosophy (Safran, 2003: 442). The eradication of what are today considered minority languages, might therefore be understood less as the *intention* of the revolutionaries, than as the presumed necessary repercussion of their pre-Romantic vision of nation-building (cf. May, 2012: 168).

Regardless, the effects of the overtly hostile policies of this period (and the later Third Republic which it inspired [Cohen, 2000: 32]), remain dramatic, leaving “deep-rooted emotional marks on the mentality of the French of the regions.” (Nolan, 2011: 97). This section will therefore consider several perceived and declared language policies which served to “dialectise”, “ruralise” and “criminalise” (Hassanpour, Sheyholislami & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2012: 12) the country’s other linguistic varieties. It will then examine the manner in which the education system reportedly contributed to the dissemination and internalisation of these negative ideologies, and consider various accounts of their effects.

Firstly, denying the status of “language” to any linguistic variety other than French constituted a key ideological act, evident in various sources, separating people into “civilised” and “savages” (Calvet, 1974: 161). As Van Herk (2012: 13-15) explains, the distinction between “languages” and “dialects” (or other similar terms) is frequently more politically than linguistically determined. The former often bears the official “seal of approval” of some influential institution due to its significance to history, literature or its high degree of codification (cf. Calvet, 1974: 120-121). Resultingly, other linguistic varieties, lacking in the same prestige, are perceived as “less than full or real languages” (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1995: 85), and labelled differently to reflect this.

In the case of France, languages other than French were viewed not as *langues* but as *idiômes*, or as *patois* or *jargons* (both implying “incorrect” or “incomprehensible” speech [see *patois*, n.d.; *jargon*, n.d.]⁶ (Barère, 1794; Grégoire, 1794). Barère (1794: 10), presenting a bill regarding the expansion of French language teaching, exemplifies this:

“Besides, how much have we spent for the translation of the laws of the first National Assemblies into the **dialects** [*idiômes*] spoken in France, as if it was up to us to maintain **this barbaric jargon** [*jargons*] and these **vulgar dialects** [*idiômes*] which can only now serve fanatics and counter-revolutionaries.” (my translation and emphasis, **A1.5**).

Through the qualifiers “barbaric” and “vulgar” used in this quotation alone, it is possible to see the associations of coarseness and unsophistication that the *Convention* attributed to the country’s other varieties. This is in stark contrast to the depiction of French itself, which Barère (ibid.: 2) describes as “the most beautiful language in Europe”. In addition, as evidenced by discussions by the *Comité d’instruction publique* (1794: 232, 236) on 17 November 1794, and its subsequent decree (ibid.: 234-237), this was an association that they wished to be passed on to future generations, as well as their parents; dictating that the language of education be French and relegating the “dialects” to a merely “auxiliary” role, to be discarded as soon as possible. The role of education will be discussed later.

This reification of the linguistic hierarchy of French languages through dialectisation was naturally accompanied by the ruralising or de-intellectualising of the *langues régionales*. In a direct address to citizens, urging them to “banish from every region of France these *jargons* which are the scraps of feudalism and the landmarks of slavery” (*Convention nationale*, 1794, cited in McNulty, 2017a) the *Convention* stated:

“Reading, writing and speaking the national language: these are the indispensable elements of knowledge. [...] Your representatives [...] are preparing **new ways to enlighten the most ignorant hamlets**; are the citizens who inhabit them not children of the fatherland? In this way, **the ignorance that was once a criminal instrument of kings will henceforth be the crime of individuals!!!**” (*Convention nationale*, 1794: 4-5, my translation and emphasis, **A1.6**).

⁶ Martel (2013: 271) remarks that the term “patois” served as an umbrella term for all forms of speech in France other than French: from varieties which differed little from French itself, to notably distinct languages such as Basque.

The correlation between the speaking of languages other than French, and rurality – and by extension “backwardness” and “lacking in education” – is apparent here, while the national language is presented as the route to freedom and knowledge. Relatedly, the “limitedness” of these languages, and their supposed inability to fully reproduce sentiments expressed in French is also alluded to (ibid.: 2-3). Furthermore, earlier in the same exhortation, the *Convention* reminds parents that their children are the property of the French Republic, and that failing in their duty to instruct them in French would be detrimental to their futures, and ultimately the future survival of the Republic itself (ibid.: 3).

Furthermore, Woehrling (2013: 74-75) highlights an attempt by the *Convention*, in the *Décret du 2 thermidor an II* (20th July 1794) to criminalise the use of languages other than French in the drafting of legal documents by civil servants – a crime which could incur six months of imprisonment and summary dismissal. Targeted at civil servants, however, this law would presumably have minimal effect on the daily language use of *patois* speakers, and, regardless, Woehrling notes that in September of the same year this law was suspended, and therefore its sanctions were not enforced (ibid.)

Nevertheless, as illustrated in the quotations above, a lack of knowledge of the national language, was thought to be a “crime”, perpetuating one’s ignorance (*Convention nationale*, 1794: 4-5). Furthermore, the demonization and portrayal of the *patois* as antithetical to Republican ideals, and damaging to national cohesion, could be considered to have rendered their use symbolically criminal. Barère (1794: 8), in a frequently cited section of his report on behalf of the *Comité de salut publique*, stated that:

“Federalism and superstition speak *bas-breton*; emigration and hatred of the Republic speak German; the counter-revolution speaks Italian, and extremism speaks Basque. Let us break these instruments of harm and error.” (my translation, A1.7)

The mere act of speaking another language, therefore, was indexical of treasonous intentions. National security – and this was the purview of the *Comité* – necessitated linguistic uniformity, and one’s language choice was even explicitly presented as a means by which “one’s friends and one’s enemies will be recognised” (*Convention nationale*, 1794: 5; see also McNulty, 2017a: 4). Simultaneously, the *patois* were consistently subjected to vilification: described as “corrupt” (de Talleyrand-Périgord, 1791: 95; *Convention nationale*, 1794: 7), “filthy” and offensive to the ear (Chalvet, 1793: 11).

Though not necessarily explicitly codified, therefore, the perceived national language policy of France during the post-Revolutionary period was one of open hostility towards the country's "regional languages". The ideologies evoked in political discourse of this time – denigrating and diabolising these languages in the eyes of their speakers – could arguably be viewed as linguicidal.

6.1 The role of the education system

Similar to many other observed cases of linguisticism or linguisticide (e.g. Hassanpour, Sheyholislami & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2012; Fernandes, 2012; Fernández Asensio, 2014; Edwards & Pritchard Newcombe, 2005; Dorian, 1981; Nkwetisama, 2017; Nicholas, 2008), the French education system was regarded during the Revolutionary period as an effective means of ensuring linguistic assimilation, through the transmission of Revolutionary ideals to the youngest generations (cf. *Convention Nationale*, 1794).

However, despite its overt condemnation of the *patois*, and desire to achieve their destruction, the *Convention* was ultimately unable to impose the use of French as the sole classroom language in schools (Woehrling, 2013: 74). On one hand, as Woehrling (*ibid.*) highlights, a lack of resources and fluent French teachers made achieving this impracticable. On the other, the realisation of the *Comité d'instruction publique* (1794: 233) that most *patois*-speaking children would have no knowledge of French on their arrival at primary school forced them reluctantly to consider a form of "subtractive [bilingual] education" (e.g. Baker, 2011: 72), whereby local languages would be used only to hasten the learning and propagation of French. This decision, alone, due to the fact that children "are effectively transferred to the dominant group linguistically and culturally" (Skutnabb-Kangas & Dunbar, 2010: 11), has been considered genocidal in recent years (*ibid.*: 12; see also Anders-Baer et al., 2008).

However, during the French Third Republic (1870-1940), particularly under the auspices of Education minister Jules Ferry, *patois* were more formally proscribed during school (e.g. Horiot, 2011). Through a series of laws enacted between the years 1879 and 1886, primary school education became free of charge, compulsory and secular (see Sénat, 2018). Unlike previously, where the voluntary nature of education meant that many would choose not to

attend, these laws meant that all of France's children would now be required to undertake education from ages six to thirteen (Broudic, 2013: 353).

According to the programme *Histoire au Quotidien* (Mathieu-Despretz, 2017), these schools became the locus of nationwide “indoctrination” of republican values:

“They [children] are instilled [...] through rote learning, with love of the fatherland, national pride, and also these notions of “heroes”: of dying for the fatherland.” (ibid., my translation, **A1.8**)

This “indoctrination” – or what Calvet (1974: 175-176) refers to as “propaganda” – was accompanied by the dissemination to young children of the linguicidal ideologies that had been propagated by the revolutionary nation-builders of the late 18th century. Caldwell (1994: 295), in his overview of language policy evolutions in France, explains this process thus: “...at the school level, French was enjoined as the vehicle of success, regional language [sic] denigrated as an impediment...”. Davy (1950, in Bourdieu, 1991: 48-49), too, aptly describes the role of teachers in the Post-Revolutionary educational system as being not only “*maître à parler* (teacher of speaking)” but also “*maître à penser* (teacher of thinking)”. This effectively emphasises the school's role in the attitude shift process: priming students to believe in the “superiority” of the national language over their own mother tongues (Bourdieu, 1991: 49),

As illustrated in Figures 3 and 4, children were forbidden from speaking their mother tongues on school grounds, even during break times (Chauvet, 1897 cited in Bonet, 2014: 31). Moreover, in both, the association between Catalan and Breton with uncleanliness seems apparent. Figure 3 depicts the wall of a school in Aiguatèbia, in the Catalan-speaking region of France, onto which the words *Parlez français, Soyez propres* were painted. The intended meaning of the word “propres” is ambiguous, possessing many possible translations including “neat”, “proper” and “honest” (see *propre*, n.d.). Many sources (e.g. Minder, 2017: 89; Broudic, 2013: 365; Mamadouh, 2017: 58; Bryson & Movsesian, 2017: 194) however, have interpreted the text as reading “Speak French, Be Clean”.

Of course, as Bonet (2014: 29) notes, a hallmark of the Ferry education system was its emphasis on the hygiene of its pupils, and therefore the phrases “Speak French” and “Be Clean” may indeed be separate instructions. However, their placement together – as well as,

in Figure 4, depicting the prohibition of speaking Breton included in the same rule as that against spitting – certainly seems to suggest some implicit correlation between children’s language choice, and the extent to which they were considered “clean” as a result (Broudic, 2013: 367).



Figure 3: The words "Speak French Be Clean" remaining on the wall of a state school in the town of Aiguatèbia, in the south of France. Source: Urroz (2009). (see also Bonet, 2014; Broudic, 2013: 366).

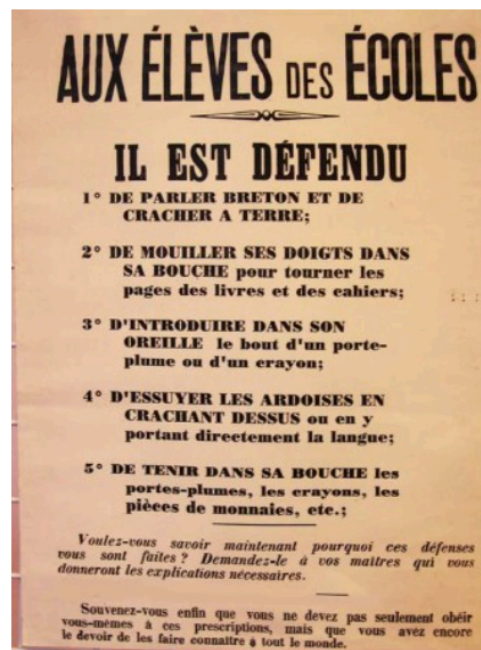


Figure 4: "It is forbidden to speak *breton* or to spit on the ground." - A list of school rules which seems to equate speaking *breton* with unhygienic or inappropriate behaviour. Source: Baillavoine (2007, see also Le Dù, 2006).

Additionally, the use of the *symbole* in primary schools of *patois*-speaking *communes*, is well documented (Figure 5). The *symbole* was an object (e.g. a wooden clog, a small chalkboard, a button or simply a sign with an incriminating inscription) that hung around the neck of a

pupil caught speaking their mother tongue in school (Broudic, 2013: 362). If the child to whom it was given still possessed it at the end of the day, he or she was reportedly subjected to a range of punishments from detention and ritual humiliation to corporal punishment and even more violent physical abuse (ibid.: 362-363). These punishments could also include writing the words “I will no longer speak *patois*” up to one hundred times (ibid.: 362), as well as receiving the admonishment: “You must not speak *patois* if you are going to succeed in life!” from the teacher (Colliou, 2010 cited in Broudic, 2013: 359).



Figure 5: A child wearing the *symbole*.
Source: L'Écolier Illustré (n.d. cited in École Marcel Pagnol Saint-Sulpice, 2009).

To avoid such punishments, the child wearing the *symbole* could pass it to someone else whom they caught speaking *patois* (ibid.: 354). Reminiscent of the young *Spies* eager to denounce *thought-criminals* in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (2003: Location 669), this system effectively formed children to be always on the lookout for a classmate not speaking in French, in order to offload their punishment onto someone else. The alleged effect was to cause students to become self-conscious about their language use, wary of being denounced for speaking the outlawed variety (Elégoët, 1978: 14).

Through the school language policies under the Ferry education system, then, the active linguicidal ideologies of “dialectisation”, “de-intellectualisation” and “criminalisation”

(Hassanpour, Sheyholislami & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2012: 12), first voiced during the Revolution, were inculcated in the youngest generation on a national scale. The *symbole* – and the castigations and humiliation that accompanied it – effectively taught children that their mother tongues were taboo: inferior, inappropriate and worthy of shame.

6.2 Effects

The effects of this education are apparent. Calvet (1974: 175-176) explains that children “began to feel ashamed for speaking the language of their parents”, creating a form of cultural barrier between children, and their parents and home communities.

Additionally, negative associations of Catalan and Breton learned in school would seem to remain prevalent in the minds of some speakers educated during this period, according to some studies. For example, Marley (1991: 53-54), mentioned above, found that, for her interviewees:

“Catalan is the language that they associate with punishment and ridicule, and to admit to speaking it would be to admit to being from a lowly background.”

One participant in Elégöet’s (1978: 184-185) biographical study, too, reveals that:

“No one wants to say that they speak Breton, that they are Breton. It’s like that everywhere. [...] People are ashamed of Breton. Because they were ridiculed.[...] All of the young people...are ashamed of saying they speak Breton.” (my translation, **A1.9**).

These statements are, of course, overgeneralisations. Simple evidence of this would be the formation of the *Écoles Diwan* (Breton-language immersion schools) only one year before Elégöet’s publication (*Agence France-Presse*, 2017), and the over 4000 students enrolled in them as of October 2017 (*ibid.*), revealing a persisting affinity for the Breton language.

Nevertheless, these citations certainly seem to be evidence of the “colonisation of consciousness”, to which Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson (1995: 88) refer. Martin-Granel (2001: 206-207), describing the highly symbolic use, by Belgian colonisers of the Congo, of a tin of excrement as a *symbole*, coins the term “internalised racism” to explain the phenomenon whereby many inhabitants of former colonies would “reproduce the prejudices

of their teachers' by continuing to use derogatory terms to refer to those from non-urban locations with poor command of French.

As seen above, the French situation appears similar. The linguicidal ideologies propagated during France's period of active linguicide were internalised by several generations of young speakers, leading, over time to a change in the way that many perceived their mother tongues. This, then, could arguably be posited as a contributing factor in the apparently "voluntary" linguistic suicide undergone by minority language speakers.

7. Passive Linguicide

The mid-20th century marked, superficially at least, a difference in the treatment of France's indigenous minority languages. Democracy, and the ideals of the French Revolution, having been successfully established, the threat of schism through linguistic diversity seemed minimal enough to allow France the "luxury" of affording limited recognition to these languages (Gardin, 1975: 34).

However, while positive differences in policy seem evident, on closer inspection, the ideologies evoked could be considered potentially linguicidal in a passive sense. This section will consider evidence of folklorisation, as well as marginalisation of France's *langues régionales* present in language policies from this period onward, and provide brief accounts of their potential effects in shaping speakers' attitudes.

7.1 Folklorisation

To recapitulate, Fishman (1987: 7) defined folklorisation as:

“...surrendering the [...] status-related interactions of modern life (and, therefore, of language life) and [...] opting for trivialisation via a focus on the rural past (old wives' tales and the folksongs and dances of a bygone age.)”

Fishman uses this description to describe the criticisms of many in response to language revitalisation efforts focussed on the local and cultural domains of language which he considers areas of more pressing concern than corpus planning for e.g. “astrophysics” or

“middle level technology” (ibid.: 9). While Fishman’s assertions that revitalisation should focus firstly on restoring home and community language use (ibid.) are apt, the ideological implications of overemphasising a language’s cultural significance may prove more damaging than rehabilitating.

As mentioned in McNulty (2017a: 5), Joseph (2014), discussing the different meanings – or “mojos” – that languages possess for their speakers, positions “heritage” and “modernity” at opposite ends of a spectrum. The “heritage mojo”, he claims, allows one to:

“...form a supra-material, magical connection to the **past**, to origins, to ancestors (real or imagined), to a mythical ‘first time’ in which things were more themselves, truth was truer. Such a time is mythical just **because it has vanished**” (ibid.: 127, my emphasis).

By focussing on the nostalgia of former times, therefore, policies whose intention seems to be to promote the country’s *langues régionales* may instead reinforce the notion that they are “nicely cultural but of no practical purpose” in the present (Caldwell, 1994: 304).

Of course, activities related to traditional cultures, increasing the “visibility”, and thereby vitality, of endangered languages, are undeniably important (Crystal, 2014: 174). However, as UNESCO (2003: 2) states, such languages also require “meaningful contemporary roles” in society (cf. McNulty, 2017a). In their absence, rather than fostering linguistic diversity and language revitalisation by creating new generations of active speakers, folklorising policies may instead merely create a nation of fond “rememberers” (Campbell & Muntzel, 1989: 184). In this way, such policies could effect (or fail to reverse previous) attitude shifts on the part of speakers, perpetuating the idea that these languages are incompatible with modernity.

The *Loi Deixonne* (1951) has frequently been identified as a policy of folklorisation (e.g. Oakes, 2017; Caldwell, 1994; Gardin, 1975; Giacomo, 1975). This law allowed primary schools to dedicate one hour per week to the teaching of the basics of “local speech”, along with extracts of related literature (Article 3). In secondary schools, optional classes were permitted in “local languages and dialects, as well as local folklore, literature and folk arts” (Article 6). Trainees intending to teach in areas where these languages were spoken were also offered training courses focusing “not only on the language itself, but also on folklore,

literature and local folk arts.” (Article 5). Indeed, derivatives of the word “folk” appear five times in this policy of only eleven articles.

This law certainly represents a significant departure from previous policies in that these languages (once demonised as *patois* or *jargons*) are given an official place in the school curriculum. However, at best, it might be considered a policy of “protective erasure”: preserving a place for *langues régionales*, but on such limited terms that it “maintain[s] [their] invisibility” and “keep[s] [them] on the margins of school life – both literally and ideologically” (Brown, 2010: 312). The allotment of only one hour of optional lessons, which must also include a focus on folklore and crafts, likely limits actual language instruction time. Not only would this presumably have deleterious effects on language acquisition, but the deliberate mixture with traditional cultures, as Gardin (1975: 35) notes, would anchor these languages firmly in the past and depict them as “dead language[s]” (cf. McNulty, 2017a).

While the *Loi Deixonne* was fully abrogated by 2006 (see *Loi Deixonne*, 1951), this folklorisation of the *langues régionales* seems evident in several more recent policies. For example, (McNulty, 2017a: 5) notes that they were first mentioned in the Constitution in 2008, when article 75-1 was inserted⁷, stating:

“The regional languages belong to the patrimony of France” (Constitution du 4 octobre 1958, Art. 75-1, my translation, **A1.10**)

While affording symbolic value, the actual linguistic rights that this amendment grants to speakers remains ambiguous (Malo, 2011: 73). This fact has, indeed, been exploited by the legal system. For example, to justify its decision to prohibit the city council of Bastia (Corsica) from holding biweekly meetings in Corsican, the Appeals Court of Marseille stated that Article 75-1 was:

“...intended to mark the attachment of France to the regional languages, without actually creating an enforceable right or freedom upon individuals or territorial collectivities.” (*Cour Administrative d'Appel de Marseille*, 2011, my translation, **A1.11**)

⁷ Purposefully avoiding creating a new section specifically for regional languages, and distancing it from the recognition of French in Article 2 (Carcassonne, 2011: Location 1129).

Despite this symbolic “attachment”, using Corsican at these meetings would contravene the obligation of civil servants to use French (see section 7.2), and was therefore disallowed (ibid.).

Furthermore, the government agency *Délégation française à la langue française et aux langues de France* (DGLFLF), in several publications, has stressed the link between the *langues régionales* and the arts and education sectors, simultaneously limiting discussion of their use in more official capacities:

“For languages whose transmission is currently almost no longer assured by traditional means (through family or environment), school and artistic creativity represent the principal way forward for the future.” (DGLFLF, 2016: 5, my translation, **A1.12**)

“...rather than the languages themselves, works using them as a means of expression are promoted.” (DGLFLF, n.d., my translation, **A1.13**)

In this way, these languages are confined primarily to cultural and educational domains which are not necessarily sufficient for their longevity (e.g. Grin, 2003: 82 – see Section 2.2.2). Additionally, the reinforcement of their significance to traditional culture may reinforce beliefs that they have little place in modern society – beliefs which supposedly characterise decisions to commit linguistic suicide (cf. Denison, 1977).

While outwardly promoting previously suppressed varieties, therefore, folklorising policies such as these could contribute to their devaluation in speakers’ eyes, and thus be considered linguicidal.

7.2 Marginalisation

While folklorisation implies focusing language promotion or status planning efforts on conserving patrimony, marginalisation refers to the general restriction of a language’s use in certain domains – especially those outside of one’s private sphere – thereby reducing their usefulness and conveying the message that they are “inconsequential” (May, 2012: 162) or “irrelevant” (UNESCO, 2003: 11). These functions may include education, using the languages in employment, business, in the receipt and provision of public services, and in the legal system (Fishman, 1987: 10-11; Grin, 2003: 45, Crystal, 2014: 174). For May (2010:

1061), this side-lining of minority languages is frequently the result of the “legitimation” and “institutionalization” of a majority language: i.e. when a dominant language is granted “officiality” (Shohamy, 2006: 61) and becomes the default instrument of communication in a large number of domains in the public sphere.

Following a failed first attempt to legislate the use of French in the form of the *Loi Bas-Lauriol* (1975) – hindered by a lack of public and political enthusiasm – the government introduced the *Loi Toubon* in 1994 (Kimmel, 1994: 23). This law draws on Article 2 of the Constitution – an amendment added in 1992 during the constitutional reform process allowing France to sign the Maastricht Treaty, and thereby become one of the founding members of the European Union (Wilcox, 1994). While this amendment legally granted the French language explicit status as the sole national language (*ibid.*), the *Loi Toubon* (1994) went one step further: declaring French to be the language of “teaching, work, trade and public services” (Article 1, see also McNulty, 2017a: 4). French was required in advertising of any form, and in any text written in the sale or operations of products (Article 2), as well as on signs and billboards (Article 3), documents produced for events and conferences (Article 6), and contracts (Article 5) or in other publications written by public bodies, or private firms offering a public service (Article 7). Any state-sponsored body must also agree to abide by the stipulations of the *Loi Toubon*, or risk having to repay any funding awarded (Article 15).

Though widely criticized (see Chateigner, 2015), the *Loi Toubon* (1994) has been invoked regularly since its enactment. In 2016, for example, a circular was disseminated throughout the public sector to remind civil servants of their legal responsibility to uphold the law in the execution of their functions (Girardin & Vallini, 2016). Furthermore, in 2004, a bill to extend its provisions was submitted to the *Assemblée nationale*, which would extend the obligation to use French in company names, and would require company directors to submit reports regarding the use of French in their organization (*Proposition de Loi Marini*, 2004).

Despite the explicit statement in Article 21 of the *Loi Toubon* (1994) that its provisions applied “without prejudice towards legislation [...] relative to the regional languages of France, and **do not oppose their usage**” (my translation and emphasis, **A1.14**), as Judge (2007: 33) highlights, both it and Article 2 of the Constitution have frequently been cited as a means of doing just this.

For example, these laws featured in the *Conseil d'Etat*'s decision in 2002 to prevent the integration of private Breton-immersion (*Diwan*) schools into the public education system (*Conseil d'Etat*, 2002). Like all schools offering education through the medium of a *langue régionale*, the *Diwan* schools are private (Judge, 2007: 134). Many possess a contract with the state which allows their staff to be remunerated by the public education system, however as they offer their education free of charge to parents, these schools suffer from a shortage of funding (*ibid.*). Integration into the *Education nationale* would address this problem and create a precedent for state funding of immersion education.

However, in its decision, the *Conseil d'Etat* (2002) stated that:

“...the contested acts [to integrate the *Diwan* schools] are ignorant of Article 2 of the Constitution, [...] and Article 1 of the law of 4th August 1994; that these acts have the effect of causing the French language to lose the primacy accorded to it by Article 2 of the Constitution...” (my translation, **A1.15**).

Skutnabb-Kangas, Nicholas & Rehyner (2016: 181) have opined that the provision of non-fee-paying state schools offering immersion education in one's mother tongue (or the language of one's predecessors) constitutes a linguistic human right, particularly due to the successes of such programmes in producing competent bilingual speakers. Yet, this ruling effectively maintained the privileged status of the French language as the medium of instruction of state schools. While other forms of state-funded regional language education have since been made available (see Section 8), its effect was therefore to further restrict the growth of Breton (and by extension all *langues régionales*) within public life.

Additionally, reference to Article 2 of the Constitution was made by the *Conseil Constitutionnel* in their decision to declare France's intended ratification of the ECRML (Council of Europe, 1992) to be unconstitutional. The Charter would oblige the French government to grant minimal language rights to minority language groups and to contribute to supporting their development in many domains of society including education, public administration, justice and culture. However, since the French nation was formed on the Revolutionary ideal of equality among citizens, united under one common language, the legal recognition of linguistic minorities is considered “intellectually impossible” (Loschak, 1989 cited in Breillat, 2001), as well as potentially threatening to national cohesion (Beacco &

Messin, 2010: 107). Therefore, in that it promoted the recognition and use of regional languages in both the private *and* public sectors, the Charter was deemed incompatible with Constitution, specifically its tenet of state monolingualism (*Conseil Constitutionnel*, 1999). This decision not only served further to deprive the *langues régionales* of vital opportunities for expansion and growth, but it denied them that which Fishman (1987: 10) underlines as most basic and essential to their survival: recognition of their status as “separate ethnolinguistic entit[ies]”.

Thus, through these measures which imposed the use (or privileging) of French in various areas of work, education and the public sector, the *langues régionales* are effectively marginalised, and prevented from occupying the same place in modern society as the national language. This, then – one might hypothesise – could be a contributing factor in speakers’ (or potential speakers’) beliefs that such languages are incompatible with the demands of modern society, and their ultimate decisions to dispense with them.

7.3 Attitude Shift

The folklorising and marginalizing ideologies outlined can also be identified in the actions and attitudes of speakers in a number of studies. The Corsican national party, *Front régionaliste corse* (1971: 54-55), in its account of Corsican political and cultural history, describes the process whereby authors writing in Corsican came to be considered historical artefacts:

“...the team of Corsican-language writers saw their role reduced to the maintenance of folklore, to a futile attachment to the past. [...] [The Corsican-language writer] is presented as a specimen, a man of another age, **ill-adapted to the modern world**. [...] **Expressing oneself in the mother tongue is to condemn oneself to being placed in a museum**. And the local writer is struck with inhibition when he wishes to speak about the present or the future. If however he does, he is condemned not to be taken seriously, not to be read, and sometimes even not to be understood.” (my translation and emphasis, **A1.16**)

Here, the folklorisation of the Corsican language is apparent. Writing in the language became, according to the *Front régionaliste corse*, inextricably linked with an eccentric sentimentality, and the writers themselves viewed as the quaint vestiges of a bygone era. Unlike instances of de-intellectualisation or ruralisation mentioned above, the author reveals

that the attitudes towards the language evoked here are generally positive (ibid.). However, its place in current society is nonetheless contested by others, who would, as shown above, be potentially unwilling or unable to interact with the modern world through Corsican (ibid.).

Harrison's (2016) study of parental attitudes and language practices in Alsatian public and private schools also found similar patterns of beliefs regarding the place of Alsatian in the region. While 90% of her participants believed the language to be important to regional culture (ibid.: 289), only approximately 54% believed that the language had a place in the school system (ibid.: 292). Moreover, the majority of these people believed that this role should be limited to, for example, "secondary subjects (music, sports, art)" or to extra-curricular activities, or that, at least, it was considerably more important to privilege the teaching of French or German (ibid.: 293-294). A further approximately 31% believed Alsatian to have no place in schools, instead believing that the primacy of French should be maintained (or that of German, given the region's proximity to Germany), or that teaching should be confined only to the home domains (ibid.: 295-296).

From these findings, one might deduce that many speakers of *langues régionales* have adopted a similar mindset to those ideologies present in the aforementioned policies. Given that their languages are supported in only limited domains, and French continues to dominate the more "important" societal spheres (cf. Crystal, 2014: 109), these speakers may be convinced that the French language possesses a more crucial role in French society. These passively linguicidal ideologies of marginalisation and folklorisation may therefore have served as the basis for their "pragmatic considerations" (Edwards, 1985: 94) and ultimate decisions to privilege French, and its teaching to their children, and to prefer supporting the maintenance of their languages under the guise of cultural preservation.

8. Signs of Change?

From the evidence presented, one might conclude that speakers of *langues régionales* have been subjected to policies which have actively dialectised, demonised and de-intellectualised their languages (**Section 5**), and others which outwardly promote, but simultaneously folklorise, them, or marginalise them while maintaining the primacy of the national language (**Section 6**). Internalising the ideologies evoked, one might reasonably conjecture that the image of these languages is effectively repainted in some speakers' minds, leading to the

beliefs that characterise the linguistic suicide process: that their mother tongues have little relevance in modern society and are merely a hinderance, compared with the socioeconomic opportunities associated with the majority language (cf. May, 2010: 1057).

These beliefs, especially when children acquire them alongside the language itself during first language acquisition (cf. Pearson, 2007: 401), may ultimately lead to voluntary decisions to cease speaking and transmitting the language. Should this process continue, therefore, the prognosis could be the death of the language(s) in question.

While linguicide creates the ideological conditions through which speakers may choose to commit linguistic suicide, therefore, policies intending to reverse attitude shift should act as catalysts to allow speakers to undo previous negative ideologies and develop positive perceptions of “confidence, self-esteem and pride” in these languages, and thereby the choice to halt or reverse the linguistic suicide process (Crystal, 2014:148-149).

In concluding, it seems appropriate to mention briefly a number of recent language policies which may be argued to evoke more positive language ideologies, and therefore to have the potential to improve speaker attitudes.

Firstly, a shift in the place accorded to *langues régionales* in the national education system seems evident. In a 2001 circular (de Gaudemar, 2001) and subsequent decree (*Arrêté du 12 mai 2003*, 2003) the possibility of undertaking state-funded *bilinguisme à parité horaire* primary and secondary educational stream was first introduced. A further Circular (Robine, 2017) describes this initiative thus:

“The assessments and evaluations carried out in the different regions concerned have confirmed the educational benefit of bilingualism in French and a regional language; [...]

Regional language teaching provided in bilingual (French-regional language) form contributes to the development of pupils’ intellectual, linguistic and cultural abilities. While at the same time allowing the transmission of regional languages, it reinforces the learning of French and prepares pupils to learn other languages. [...]

In primary school, bilingual (French-regional language) classes offer, from the first year of preschool when possible, a specific intensive curriculum, in which the regional language is both taught and is a medium of instruction in several domains of activity and learning. This curriculum is based on a principle of the provision of an

equal amount of time per week given⁸ to the usage of the regional language and to French in class...” (my translation, A1.17)

Escudé (2013: 349) hails the provision of these classes within the *Education Nationale* as “a veritable revolution in the education system”. In terms of the ideologies evoked, this text is significant for three reasons. Firstly, the very nature of the programme, in that it permits the devotion of an equal proportion of class time to teaching *through* French and the *langue régionale* seems to create a symbolic equality between the national and regional languages (cf. McNulty, 2017a: 7), thereby granting a degree of institutional “officiality” to the latter (ibid.; cf. Shohamy, 2006: 61-63). Indeed, permitting the medium of instruction to be a language other than French is, in itself, significant, in that it marks a departure from previous policies which either attempted to banish *langues régionales* and *patois* from the school grounds, or to maintain it on the fringes of the curriculum (cf. Brown, 2010).

Secondly, the use of the term *langues vivantes régionales* (Robine, 2017), in place of the terms *patois* or *jargons* previously employed, could also be considered highly meaningful (McNulty, 2017a: 7). As one possible translation of *langues vivantes* is “modern languages”, such a designation may therefore effectively acknowledge a place for the *langues régionales* in modern society, thereby countering the ruralising and folklorising ideologies with which they were previously associated. Relatedly, the text makes explicit reference to its desire to “allow the transmission of regional languages”. This would seem to demonstrate an explicit desire on the part of the policymakers to play an active role in the continuation (or restarting) of the intergenerational language transmission process – a key first domain in language revitalisation (Fishman, 1987: 10). Such targeted state intervention may assist in lowering the incidence of linguistic suicide.

Finally, the text evinces a recognition on the part of the French government of the cultural, linguistic and cognitive benefits of bilingualism in French and a regional language. As stated in Section 2, one of the fundamental tenets of linguicide is the belief that monolingualism is both normal and desirable (see e.g. Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996). That bilingualism in these languages is now not only shown to be a valid goal in and of itself⁹, and one that does not constitute a threat to national unity or to one’s learning of the national language, but is

⁸ Approximate translation of « un principe de parité horaire hebdomadaire. »

⁹ Rather than being used solely to support the learning of French, or as a form of transitional bilingualism.

portrayed here as advantageous, would seem to represent a marked change in official attitudes.

Perhaps the most significant advance in the field of education is the provision of an *Agrégation* in *langues régionales* (Le Figaro & Agence France-Presse, 2017; McNulty, 2017a, b). Created in 1766 during the rule of Louis XV, the *Agrégation* is a centralised secondary-level teaching employment competition (Chervel, 1993), which prepares teachers to work in upper secondary schools or preparatory classes for the prestigious *Grandes Ecoles* (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, 2018). Despite numerous transformations throughout its history (ibid.: 250-251), as Chervel (ibid.: 3) explains, the *Agrégation* remains of immense “importance to the French secondary education architecture”; and given that in its initial form, it was offered only in “noble subjects” (ibid.: 250), it is a process that has traditionally been associated with a high degree of prestige.

The creation, from 2018, of an *Agrégation* in many of the “languages of France”, therefore, is highly symbolic (Pech, 2017). As alluded to by supporters of *langues régionales* revitalisation movements in France, it effectively affords teachers of these languages the same job prospects as other teachers (ibid.), again creating a form of equality between them and other subjects in the curriculum, as well as affording them a place of prestige in the public sphere. Additionally, as Galloway (1995: 20) notes, economic considerations play a decisive role in influencing minority language speakers’ (as well as non-speakers’) opinions regarding the status of their languages – rendering the working world a crucial domain of language revitalisation. Since the *Agrégation* offers to members of *langue régionale* communities a clear, and prestigious career path – becoming civil servants with higher salaries than other secondary school teachers (Pech, 2017) – it may encourage more parents to view these languages as possessing potential in the modern world, and to register their children in bilingual classes (cf. McNulty, 2017a: 8).

Of course, as May (2012: 149) states, the education sector alone cannot serve to regenerate a language, as opportunities for its use in the wider society are also required. In spite of failed attempts to implement the ECRML (Council of Europe, 1992), in 2013, the French government, in this vein, commissioned a study into its implementation within the current structure of the Constitution (CC, 2013). The resulting report suggested increasing usage of *langues régionales* in public services, highlighting that civil servants could legally use these

languages with the general public provided that neither party was obliged to do so (ibid.: 79-80). It also recommended making certain services – such as nurseries, care homes, and hospitals – bilingual, by providing interpreting services and bilingual documents (ibid.: 79). Finally, increased bilingual signage and announcements in public spaces – part of the “linguistic landscape” (Landry & Bourhis, 1997) – was advised (CC, 2013: 79): a domain which Landry & Bourhis (1997: 27-29) deem influential in attributing value and vitality to endangered languages, and thereby fostering positive attitudes towards them.

Thus, despite a number of legal setbacks, and the pervading fear among some contemporary political figures of communitarianism, supposedly represented by the recognition of regional languages (e.g. Oakes, 2011; Equy, 2015), a noticeable ideological shift appears evident in several governmental policies regarding these languages. If implemented successfully, the measures suggested above, as well as those already undertaken, could contribute to granting renewed value to the *langues régionales* and aid in combating internalised negative ideologies, offering speakers a viable alternative to linguistic suicide¹⁰.

9. Concluding discussion

The purpose of this paper was to revisit two perspectives on the declining of minority languages which have often been viewed as dichotomous: those of linguistic suicide and linguicide.

Section 2.3 argued that neither perspective alone seemed sufficient to explain this decline. In most cases, speakers of minority languages – faced with the pressures of adapting to a modern, and increasingly globalised, society in which their languages possess limited value on the linguistic market (Bourdieu, 1991: 66) – must choose to shift to a dominant language (cf. Denison, 1977; Beck & Lam, 2008). However, the “voluntary” nature of this decision has been disputed precisely because of these social, economic and political pressures, which, controlled by majority groups, may restrict the freedom with which minority language speakers can exercise agency in their language choices (cf. May, 2012: 158).

¹⁰ Notably, however, a bill to grant legal recognition to these languages in sectors such as the media, the civil service, in national censuses and in the postal system (*Proposition de loi n° 3008 (rectifié)*, 2010) was submitted to the Assemblée Nationale in 2010, but has yet to be debated or adopted by parliament (e-mail to the author, 25 June 2018).

In partial consonance with May (2012), Crawford (1995) and Edwards (1985), the theoretical framework proposed in this paper suggested that – rather than as two distinct, opposing viewpoints regarding the process of minority language decline – both *linguicide* and *linguistic suicide* be considered as co-occurring – as two phases in an interconnected system. *Linguicide*, in this framework, is understood as a process in which negative ideologies regarding a linguistic variety are propagated, whether actively or passively. This process thereby creates the conditions in which speakers commit *linguistic suicide*: through an internalisation of these negative ideologies, leading to a change in speakers’ attitudes towards their mother (or ancestral) tongues, and an ultimate decision to abandon them.

Subsequently, **Sections 5-7** considered the case of French indigenous minority languages. An attempt was made to identify ideologies, evoked by both declared and perceived language policies throughout France’s history, which could be considered to have influenced a change in speakers’ attitudes towards their own languages, and contributed to their choices to commit *linguistic suicide* – and which, therefore, could be considered *linguicidal*. To conclude, **Section 8** considered various recent policies which suggested an imminent shift in official attitudes towards these languages which, if pursued, may (re-)foster positive attitudes towards them on the part of their communities (as well as French society in general).

In closing, a number of points should be emphasised. Firstly, this paper – for reasons of space – has focussed mainly on analysing the “*linguicide*” phase of the proposed framework, and has made only minimal reference to previous language attitudes research conducted in France to shed light on the shifts in speaker attitudes claimed to serve as the motivations for *linguistic suicide*. For this reason, further research is required to more fully understand the attitudes of speakers of all generations in France: to provide greater insight into the sources of these attitudes, and the manner in which they control speakers’ linguistic choices. Additional research should also study the influence of recent policy developments on modifying these attitudes.

Secondly, while policies enacted by the state, and related bodies, have been the focal point herein, these are not considered to be the sole ideological forces potentially influencing the attitudes of minority language speakers. Judge (2007) and Lodge (1993), for example, identify other factors which may have contributed to the ideological association of the *patois* with “barbarism” and “ignorance” (ibid.: 223). Increased literacy rates during the nineteenth

century, for example, allegedly contributed to the genesis of the belief that the *patois* represented unintelligence (ibid.: 224-225). Since improvements in agricultural methods led to farmers recording their practices in writing, the fact that most of the *patois* lacked a written form decreased their usability when compared with written French (ibid.: 223-224).

Furthermore, the improvement of transportation links, as well as compulsory military service, facilitated the meeting of inhabitants of rural, *patois*-speaking regions with French-speaking people from other French regions (ibid.: 225; Judge, 2007: 27), and may also have contributed to speakers of *langues régionales* feeling disempowered or embarrassed at their lack of competency in French (cf. Elégoët, 1978: 194-199).

Thus, the attitude shifts undergone by minority language speakers in France may also have been influenced by linguicidal ideologies stemming from other sources: e.g. the speech community itself, the army etc. Nevertheless, one might conjecture that state-level language policies – particularly the “indoctrinating” Ferry education system (Mathieu-Despretz, 2017) – may have served to render such implicit, pre-existing ideologies more explicit: reinforcing negative attitudes regarding the *langues régionales* and solidifying speakers’ decisions to abandon them.

Finally, as Crawford (1995: 27) pertinently suggests, linguistic suicide is only one possible response to linguicidal ideologies such as those discussed herein: resistance has equally been observed (thus proving further that speakers possess do agency in their language choices.) Forthcoming studies, therefore, could illuminate the reasons behind both reactions to linguicidal language policies, and thereby, why endangered languages survive in spite of them.

Appendix 1

Original versions of French texts translated in the main body of the dissertation

Note: Occasionally, to situate the quote within the wider context of the section of the text cited, sections elided in the main body of the dissertation have also been included. In these cases, the sentences included above have been emboldened. All emphases added in the dissertation have been removed.

A1.1: Duneton, C. 1999. *La mort du français*. Paris: Plon, p. 14.

« [...] elles ne se sont pas effacées sous l'effet naturel de la simple et inéluctable transformation d'une société en mutation, bla-bla-bla foutaise ! Ce discours tarte à la crème, qui noie efficacement le poisson, cache le fait que ces langues minoritaires furent bel et bien interdites, chassées du territoire par la République. Pour des raisons politiques précises, mûries, et avec des intentions d'enfer excellentes, qui n'ont rien à voir avec le chant des évolutions fatales et la modernité. »

A1.2: Front régionaliste corse 1971. *Main baisse sur une île*. Corbara: Accademia d'i Vagabondi, p. 62, 64.

« Cette 'intox' prolongée, ce martèlement, cette politique constante, cohérente, implacable, étendue à tous les instants de la vie quotidienne, devait un jour porter ses fruits. [62] [...] Complexés, convaincus que leur langue est sans valeur, les Corses la saccagent de bon cœur. [64] »

A1.3 Elégoët, F. 1978. *Nous ne savions que le breton et il fallait parler français : mémoires d'un paysan du Léon*. La Baule: Breizh hor bro, p. 8.

« ...la stratification ethnique [...] produit une forme particulière de conscience sociale, à savoir l'identité négative ou la conscience négative de soi. Cette identité négative inculquée à la population bretonne mènera à des conduites de désidentification ou d'auto-déstruction. En effet, la génération qui succède à ces paysans réagira violemment contre la société qui est ici rapportée et la troisième génération ignorera ce qu'elle fut. »

A1.4 Ordonnance no. 188 de 1539 (Ordonnance de Villers-Cotterêts) 1539. [Online]. Available: http://www.axl.cefan.ulaval.ca/francophonie/Edit_Villers-Cotterets-complt.htm [Accessed 8 July 2018], Arts. 110-111.

« Art. 110. – Et afin qu'il n'y ait casue de douter sur l'intelligence desdits arrêts, nous voulons et ordonnons qu'ils soient faits et écrits si clairement, qu'il n'y ait ni puisse avoir aucune ambiguïté ou incertitude ne lieu à demander interprétation.

Art. 111. – Et pour ce que telles choses sont souvent advenues sur l'intelligence des mots latins contenus esdits arrests, nous voulons d'oresnavant que tous arrests, ensemble toutes autres procédures, soient de nos cours souveraines et autres subalternes et inférieures, soient de registres, enquestes, contrats, commissions, sentences, testaments, et autres quelconques, actes et exploits de justice, ou qui en dépendent, soient prononcés, enregistrés et délivrés aux parties en langage maternel françois et non autrement. »

A1.5 Barère, B. 1794. Rapport et projet de décret, présentés au nom du Comité du salut public, sur les idiômes étrangers et l'enseignement de la langue française. Paris: Imprimerie nationale. Available: https://archive.org/details/rapportetprojetd00bare_1 [Accessed 14 July 2018], p. 10.

« D'ailleurs, combien de dépenses n'avons-nous pas faites pour la traduction des lois des deux premières Assemblées nationales dans les divers idiômes parlés en France, comme si c'était à nous à maintenir ces jargons barbares et ces idiômes grossiers qui ne peuvent plus servir que les fanatiques et les contre-révolutionnaires. »

A1.6 Convention nationale 1794. Adresse de la Convention Nationale au peuple Français, Du 16 Prairial, l'an second de la République Française une et indivisible. Paris: Imprimerie nationale. Available: https://books.google.co.uk/books?d=wLve5G5eSBUC&printsec=frontcover&source=qbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false [Accessed 9 December 2017], p. 4-5.

« Lire, écrire et parler la langue nationale, ce sont là les élémens des connoissances indispensables. Tandis les étrangers l'étudient par principes, il seroit humiliant pour vous de *n'avoir pour guide à cet égard qu'une aveugle routine*. Des maîtres ont été établis pour enseigner & propager la langue française dans les départemens où elle est peu connue. Vos représentans qui ont à cœur de communiquer immédiatement avec vous, préparent de nouveaux moyens pour éclairer les hameaux les plus ignorés, les citoyens qui les habitent ne sont-ils pas les enfans de la patrie ? Ainsi l'ignorance qui étoit autrefois un instrument du crime des rois, seroit désormais le crime des individus !!! »

A1.7 Barère, B. 1794. Rapport et projet de décret, présentés au nom du Comité du salut public, sur les idiômes étrangers et l'enseignement de la langue française. Paris: Imprimerie nationale. Available: https://archive.org/details/rapportetprojetd00bare_1 [Accessed 14 July 2018], p. 8.

« Le fédéralisme & la superstition parlent bas-breton; L'émigration & la haine de la République parlent allemand; la contre-révolution parle l'italien, & le fanatisme parle le basque. Brisons ces instrumens [sic] de dommage et d'erreur. »

A1.8 Mathieu-Despretz (2017) *Les lois Jules Ferry sur l'école* (6). [Online] Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tvauyrfllhgg> [Accessed 15 July 2018].

- « ... on leur inculque, vous le voyez bien, par le par cœur, l'amour pour la patrie, la fierté nationale et puis ces notions de héros – de mourir pour la patrie. »
- « Donc en fait, cet enseignement de l'école c'est un peu un endoctrinement des petits Français ? »

– « Absolument. [...] »

A1.9 Elégoët, F. 1978. *Nous ne savions que le breton et il fallait parler français : mémoires d'un paysan du Léon*. La Baule: Breizh hor bro, p. 185.

« Personne ne veut dire qu'il sait le breton, qu'il est breton. C'est ainsi partout. Personne ne veut dire qu'il est breton. Les gens ont honte du breton. Parce qu'on les raillait. [...] Tous les jeunes...ont honte de dire qu'ils savent le breton... »

A1.10 *Constitution du 4 octobre 1958* 1958. [Online]. Available: <http://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/conseil-constitutionnel/francais/la-constitution/la-constitution-du-4-octobre-1958/texte-integral-de-la-constitution-du-4-octobre-1958-en-vigueur.5074.html> [Accessed 22 July 2018], Art. 75-1.

« ARTICLE 75-1.

Les langues régionales appartiennent au patrimoine de la France. »

A1.11 Cour Administrative d'Appel de Marseille [CAAM]. 2011. *Lecture du jeudi 13 octobre 2011, N° 10MA02330* [Online]. Available: <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichJuriAdmin.do?oldAction=rechJuriAdmin&idTexte=CETATEXT000024736528&fastReqId=1405277086&fastPos=1> [Accessed 22 July 2018].

« ...que le pouvoir constituant a, par l'adoption par l'article 40 de loi constitutionnelle no 2008-724 du 23 juillet 2008 portant modernisation des institutions de la Vème République qui a introduit dans la Constitution du 4 octobre 1958 l'article 75-1, **entendu marquer l'attachement de la France aux langues régionales, sans pour autant créer un droit ou une liberté opposable dans le chef des particuliers ou des collectivités territoriales...** »

A1.12 Délégation française à la langue française et aux langues de France [DGLFLF]. 2016. *Références 2016: Les langues de France* [Online]. Paris: Délégation française à la langue française et aux langues de France. Available: <http://www.culture.gouv.fr/content/download/138305/1515485/version/2/file/LgdeFr-2016.pdf> [Accessed 22 July 2018], p. 5.

« Pour des langues dont la transmission n'est quasiment plus assurée à l'heure actuelle sur le mode traditionnel (par la famille et le milieu), l'école et la créativité artistique représentent les principales voies de l'avenir. »

A1.13 Délégation française à la langue française et aux langues de France [DGLFLF]. n.d.(a). *Langues de France* [Online]. Available: <http://www.culture.gouv.fr/Thematiques/Langue-francaise-et-langues-de-France/Politiques-de-la-langue/Langues-de-France> [Accessed 22 July 2018].

« L'action du ministère de la culture pour le plurilinguisme interne s'organise autour de quelques priorités : [...]

- Soutenir financièrement les secteurs où la langue est un vecteur de création, comme le spectacle vivant, la chanson, le livre ou l'audiovisuel : **plutôt que les langues en elles-mêmes, sont promues les œuvres qui les prennent comme moyen d'expression.** »

A1.14 Loi n° 94-665 du 4 août 1994 relative à l'emploi de la langue française (Loi Toubon) (1994) NOR: MCCX940007L. [Online]. Available: <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT00005616341> [Accessed 30 June 2018].

« Article 21

Les dispositions de la présente loi s'appliquent sans préjudice de la législation et de la réglementation relatives aux langues régionales de France et ne s'opposent pas à leur usage. »

A1.15 Conseil d'Etat. 2002. *Ordonnance du juge des référés du 15 juillet 2002 N° 248203 - 248205 - UNSA EDUCATION ET AUTRES - CONSEIL NATIONAL DES GROUPES ACADEMIQUES DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT PUBLIC (CNGA)* [Online]. Available: <http://www.conseil-etat.fr/Decisions-Avis-Publications/Decisions/Selection-des-decisions-faisant-l-objet-d-une-communication-particuliere/Ordonnance-du-juge-des-referes-du-15-juillet-2002> [Accessed 22 July 2018].

« ...que les actes contestés méconnaissent directement l'article 2 de la Constitution, l'article L. 121-3 du code de l'éducation et l'article 1er de la loi du 4 août 1994 ; que ces actes ont pour effet de faire perdre à la langue française la primauté que lui reconnaît l'article 2 de la Constitution... »

A1.16 Front régionaliste corse 1971. *Main baisse sur une île*. Corbara: Accademia d'i Vagabondi, p. 54-55.

« ...l'équipe des écrivains de langue corse en même temps qu'elle s'amenuisait quantitativement par la mort de la plupart de ses membres (les rares survivants ont aujourd'hui dépassé le soixantaine) **voyait réduit à la maintenance folklorique, au passéisme stérile**. D'un écrivain en langue locale, on s'applique à dire qu'il est *dialectal* ou patoisant. **On le présente comme un spécimen, un homme d'un autre âge, inadapté dans le monde moderne**. On l'accable d'un faux intérêt, on se montre condescendant à son endroit. Il passe pour un *bonhomme* amusant par ses lubies et ses tics. Présenté sous ce jour, il est rendu inoffensif. On se permet de le fêter, d'entretenir sa manie, on s'offre même le luxe de le montrer à la télévision. Cela aussi est une dévastatrice. Aussi les écrivains dits

dialectaux rencontrent-ils de très grandes difficultés à détruire cette fausse langue vers la langue maternelle, c'est pour exprimer ce que ne leur permet pas de rendre la langue importée. Il reste que l'idiôme ayant peu évolué, si les thèmes peuvent changer, les images et le vocabulaire sont presque toujours puisés dans le passé – et l'on ne sait plus parler que du village, de la fontaine, de la chèvre ou de l'âne. Ce qui implique la réduction aux genres mineurs ; nouvelles, poèmes de petite portée, billets creux aux journaux locaux, épigrammes et chansonnettes. C'est ainsi que naissent encore parfois des œuvres réduites à la fonction de refus du présent, de chemins de fuite. **S'exprimer en langue maternelle, c'est se condamner à être mis au musée. Et l'écrivain local est frappé d'inhibition quand il veut parler du présent ou de l'avenir. S'il le fait cependant, il se condamne à ne pas faire sérieux, à ne pas être lu, quelquefois même à ne pas être compris.** »

A1.17 Robine, F. 2017. Circulaire no. 2017-072 du 12 avril 2017, Langues et cultures régionales: Circulaire relative à l'enseignement des langues et cultures régionales, NOR: MENE1711397C. *Bulletin officiel de l'Education Nationale*. No 15 du 13 avril 2017. Available: http://www.education.gouv.fr/pid285/bulletin_officiel.html?cid_bo=115565 [Accessed 8 August 2018].

« Les bilans et évaluations réalisés dans les différentes régions concernées ont confirmé l'intérêt éducatif d'un bilinguisme français-langue régionale ; c'est pourquoi les ouvertures de classes bilingues à l'école ont été développées et les sections existantes en collège et lycée ont été consolidées et étendues. [...]

L'enseignement de la langue régionale dispensé sous la forme bilingue français-langue régionale contribue au développement des capacités intellectuelles, linguistiques et culturelles des élèves. Tout en permettant la transmission des langues régionales, il conforte l'apprentissage du français et prépare les élèves à l'apprentissage d'autres langues. [...]

À l'école, les classes bilingues français-langue régionale proposent, dès la petite section lorsque c'est possible, un cursus spécifique intensif, dans lequel la langue régionale est à la fois langue enseignée et langue d'enseignement dans plusieurs domaines d'activité et d'apprentissage. Ce cursus repose sur un principe de parité horaire hebdomadaire dans l'usage de la langue régionale et du français en classe... »

Appendix 2

Language transmission statistics from the “Enquête education” national survey conducted in 1992. (See Section 4)

“Language transmission by parents raised in a language other than French”

<i>Linguistic Variety</i>	<i>Language in which parents were raised</i>		<i>Language they usually speak to their own children</i>		<i>Loss rate</i> %
	No.	%	No.	%	
<i>French</i>			1415	68.0%	
<i>Gallo-Roman varieties</i>	157	7.5	11	0.5	-95
<i>Creoles from the Overseas Departments and Mauritius</i>	75	3.5	7	0.5	-90
<i>Italian (including regional dialects)</i>	181	8.5	17	1.0	-90
<i>of which Corsican</i>	26	1.0	3	-	-90
<i>Spanish</i>	167	8.0	30	1.5	-80
<i>Portuguese</i>	292	14.0	127	6.0	-55
<i>Non-romance languages of France</i>	292	14.0	79	4.0	-75
<i>of which Alsatian</i>	230	11.0	79	4.0	-65
<i>of which Breton</i>	62	3.0	-	-	-100
<i>Germanic or Scandinavian languages</i>	100	5.0	23	1.0	-75
<i>Slavic and Balkan languages</i>	90	4.5	27	1.5	-70
<i>of which Polish</i>	51	2.5	12	0.5	-75
<i>Arabic</i>	439	21.0	218	10.5	-50
<i>Berber languages</i>	69	3.5	21	1.0	-70
<i>Turkish</i>	51	2.5	49	2.5	-5
<i>Vietnamese</i>	30	1.5	14	0.5	-55
<i>Black African languages [sic]</i>	53	2.5	14	0.5	-75
<i>Others</i>	88	4.0	34	1.5	-60
<i>Total</i>	2085	100.0	2085	100	

Source: “Enquête education” conducted by INSEE-INED, 1992 and cited in:

Héran, F. 1993 (December). L'unification linguistique de la France. *Population et Sociétés: Bulletin Mensuel d'Informations de l'Institut National d'Etudes Démographiques*, [Online], 285. 1-3. Available: https://www.ined.fr/fichier/s_rubrique/18777/pop_et_soc_francais_285.fr.pdf [Accessed 30 May 2018], p. 2.

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