

FRENCH AND CANADIAN INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE DOCTRINE
AND SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

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One of the most important French grammar rules is the rule of superiority: Masculine subjects always trump feminine subjects when there are multiple subjects. Superiority is closely followed by the acceptance that all nouns have a grammatical gender, either masculine or feminine. Since 1984, and over the span of forty years, these rules have been challenged on multiple levels of French society. The research conducted over the course of this thesis focuses on the mentality and reactions of the French people towards inclusive language made up of inclusive writing campaigns, the feminization of traditionally masculine names, career positions, and titles, and the introduction of gender-neutral forms of conjugating and neo-pronouns. The studied responses are categorized into those of the French government, the Académie Française, as well as those from the Canadian government and the Office québécois de la langue française. Research demonstrates the existence of a clear division between “traditionalist” and progressive values at work within the afore-mentioned levels of French societal attitudes. While official government publications and committees seem to reflect a positive attitude towards the adoption of feminized terms, the lack of support for inclusive writing systems by the government contradicts this. This thesis outlines these responses and reactions, seeking to establish a timeline for the implementation and acceptance of feminized terms and neutralization efforts in both the French and Canadian governments.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Importance of Grammatical Correctness in the French Language

Since before the 17th century, the French language has been a highly political, fiercely protected, and prized language. This is not to say that other languages are not valued for their cultural heritage and importance, but the French language has always stood out in this respect. In 1635, the weight of the cultural value placed on French was cemented with the establishment of the Académie Française, an organization charged with defining, refining, and protecting the French language from those who might wish to alter it. Since its establishment, the Académie has been publishing a dictionary of those words considered to be genuine to the French language, handing down rulings concerning any reforms of spelling or grammar, and is considered to be the guard and safeguard of the sanctity of the French language. The concept of language pride and purity continues outside of this organization, however, and is ever present even in school settings. Grammar and spelling are taught in French schools up until the ninth grade and special grammar competitions called *dictées* are held and are often regarded as a sport. In fact, one of the most prominent French stereotypes is that the French are fiercely proud of their language and reject practically any proposal to modify it, possibly stemming from this idea of linguistic purity and the ever present Académie Française.

With the rise of the feminism and LGBTQ+ rights movements since the 1980s around the world and specifically in France, the French language and its fierce adherents have found themselves in a precarious situation. Unlike the English language, the Romance language of French relies on gendered language. Every noun has a grammatical gender, either masculine or feminine, and adjectives must agree in gender and number with the noun that is modified,

creating a strict “two-gender” environment and the widespread acceptance that there are only two genders: man and woman. All adjectives in French have four forms: masculine singular, masculine plural, feminine singular, and feminine plural. This phenomenon is not present in languages such as English and has led to a visible and audible difference between the grammatically masculine and grammatically feminine. For example, *il est français* means to say “he is French” and *elle est française* “she is French.” In English, no audible difference is perceived in the pronunciation of the adjective “French,” but in the French pronunciation, the difference between the grammatically masculine and grammatically feminine adjectives is clear.

The grammatical gender of a noun is indicated by either a definite (*la, le*) or indefinite article (*une, un*) preceding a noun. These nouns include the typical places (*le supermarché* is the grammatically masculine grocery store, while *la piscine* is the grammatically feminine swimming pool) and things (*le stylo* is the grammatically masculine pen, while *la bouteille* is the grammatically feminine bottle). Titles of individuals and people are also included in gendered nouns meaning traditionally, there have been masculine words for professions that were considered to be “men’s work” and feminine words for professions considered to be “women’s work.” This dichotomy ostracizes both men and women who fulfill a position that was considered to be work for the other; neither men nor women are able to accurately speak about their profession and must use nouns and adjectives that do not correspond to their respective gender identities (for example, a woman minister being referred to by a masculine term).

Additionally, there are only two currently accepted personal pronouns in French, *il* and *elle*, “he” and “she” respectively. Whereas in English, the adoption of the singular “they” pronoun has been widely accepted as grammatically correct, there is currently no singular gender-neutral personal pronoun in French that is considered to be “grammatically correct.”

Several have been proposed, most popularly *iel* and *eil*, but remain on the fringes in terms of wide usage. This grammatical idiosyncrasy, including the strict rules regarding the grammatical gender of adjectives has created the need for what is discussed here as “inclusive language.”

Inclusive Language Terminology

The designation “inclusive language” in this thesis refers to all linguistic innovations created with the purpose of enhancing the linguistic status of a certain group, in this instance, either women or gender non-conforming individuals. The term “inclusive language” is divided into two distinct camps of innovations, those dealing with new ways of feminizing traditionally masculine terms and new forms of writing that seek to include women and those dealing with rendering French a gender neutral language, capable of including gender non-conforming individuals who identify as neither man nor woman. These two branches are often lumped in with modern feminism and LGBTQ+ movements, as both movements deal with the rights and status of those respective parties. It is imperative to note that the need for inclusivity in the French language is twofold; Francophone women have been and are still fighting to see grammatical gender equality in their own language, while those individuals who identify outside of the gender binary are attempting to create a place for themselves within their language.

Here it is necessary to provide a general definition of “gender nonconformity,” as defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary as “the degree to which an individual’s appearance, behavior, interests, and subjective self-concept deviate from conventional norms for masculinity/femininity” (“Gender nonconformity”). These individuals are included under the umbrella of “transgender” in the acronym commonly used LGBTQ+ and may sometimes be referred to in referenced material as “nonbinary,” simply meaning those whose gender identity exists outside of the gender binary of “man” and “woman.” This is not a reference to a “third

gender” outside of the man/woman dichotomy. Nonbinary individuals simply do not identify as a man nor as a woman. When speaking of “feminine” and “masculine” genders, I use the terminology “grammatically feminine” and “grammatically masculine,” in an attempt to recognize that the gender binary exists in language. Additionally, “feminine” and “masculine” terms used here refer to grammatical gender, not an individual’s gender identity.

“Feminine/masculine” are adjectives that are used to refer to grammatical gender here.

“Woman/man” is used to refer to gender identity. Words such as “male” and “female” are not employed as these are scientific adjectives referring to sex. The terms “man” and “woman” are used instead, as these refer to human beings.

Regarding the feminization of traditionally masculine titles and terms, as a French student and teacher, the most important grammar rule that one learns and teaches is “masculine trumps feminine,” meaning that the grammatical masculine gender always takes preeminence. If there is a group of people, 100 women and one man, the group must be grammatically referred to using the masculine plural pronoun and masculine plural adjectives. In conjunction with the grammatical gender of each and every noun in the French language, a strictly “two-gender” environment is ever present in the French language. Those with traditional values regarding French grammar argue that the grammatically masculine gender has always served as “gender-neutral” and that the grammatically masculine gender automatically includes the grammatically feminine gender as well. Many modern women’s rights activists argue that indeed, this is not the case and this controversy has led to years of battle for feminized terms and sparked a multitude of grammatical innovations that can be used to raise the status of women in the French language. Innovations in this field exist in the field of *féminisation*, the French word most commonly used to describe innovations with the specific motivation to achieve grammatical gender equality

between men and women. They are referred to here under the term “feminization.”

While grammatical gender equality and the feminization of the French language is a lively and important field that is discussed in depth in this thesis, the fight for feminization and the surrounding controversy is only the one facet of the overarching debate over inclusive language. Grammatical gender equality, feminization, could be seen as the “older sibling” or grammatical gender neutrality, neutralization. The fight to raise the status of women in the French language has opened up the discussion that while grammatical gender equality is vital to ensuring the quality of life of francophone women and men alike, there is little to no ability for those who identify as neither man nor woman to accurately describe themselves. This realization has given way to the second branch of inclusive language, that of neutralization, which refers to innovations with the purpose of rendering the French language as gender-neutral as possible. These innovations have been met with harsh criticism from traditionalists and those advocating for feminization alike, as neutralization efforts often encompass new ways of conjugating verbs, new forms of punctuation, the introduction of new articles outside of the traditional *la, le, une, un*, and several new gender-neutral personal pronouns outside of *il* and *elle*.

Here it is important to note that the terms “inclusive language,” feminization, and neutralization are terms that have been defined and quantified for the purpose of the presentation of this research. As the domain of inclusive language is ever growing and evolving, there exists no official dictionary nor standardized terminology. Due to the vast array of terms and designations used in primary source documents from the French and Canadian governments that are referenced over the course of this thesis, it is necessary to clearly define what is meant by these terms. *Écriture inclusive* (literally, “inclusive writing”) is the most common French designation, but it is by no means the standard and often refers simply to feminization. Providing

the umbrella term of “inclusive language” which includes both feminization and neutralization efforts eliminates some of the terminology confusion. Terms that have been quantified for this search are available in Appendix A, which consolidates terminology used and serves as a reference point. Additionally, Appendix B provides a succinct summary of the publications and relevant governmental actions detailed in this research.

Purpose of the Study

As there exist numerous different innovations that fall under the umbrella of inclusive language, the purpose of this study is not to study the linguistic impact and functionality of these innovations, nor to provide a detailed outline of what these innovations are. Instead, the cultural responses in metropolitan France are studied, as well as an overview of actions and responses in francophone Canada. This research seeks to establish a clear divide between governmental language doctrine, being the actions and reactions of governmental institutions and personnel, and cultural language doctrine, being the actions, practices, and recommendations of organizations such as Le Haut Conseil à l'Egalité entre les femmes et les hommes, and the acceptance of both feminization and neutralization efforts in French and Canada and by the respective governments. Within governmental and cultural language doctrines exist as well those individuals who subscribe to a more “traditionalist” view of the French language, based on “purity” and the “sanctity” of grammar and linguistic tradition and those who subscribe to “progressive views” that allow for the advancement of grammatical gender equality and grammatical gender neutrality innovations.

CHAPTER 2

THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT AND L'ACADÉMIE FRANÇAISE

Modes of Communication

Although various actions had been taken by feminist fringe groups before the 1980s in regards to feminization, it was not until 1986 that these efforts were officially recognized by the French government, specifically the Office of the Prime Minister in the form of a type of government correspondence, called a *circulaire*. These short publications typically take the form of a letter signed by the sitting Prime Minister and are destined for government employees. *Circulaires* that “interpret substantive law or describe an administrative process are published on paper or online”¹ in the official news publication of the French government, *Le Journal Officiel de la République Française* (“Publication des lois, règlements et circulaires” 2020). Published *circulaires* are available through the *Légifrance* website and are part of the public domain.

After the creation of a commission to study feminization in 1984, the Académie Française quickly took up the issue of implementing feminization in governmental publications. Through the publication of a dictionary cementing the usage of “grammatically” correct French, the individuals elected to the Académie express their opinions, concerns, agreement or disagreement through the publications of declarations, articles, and announcements that vary in length from over 100 pages to a few paragraphs. As pronounced under the missions of the Académie, “the principal function of the Académie will be to work with all the care and diligence possible to give certain rules to our language and to make it pure, eloquent, and capable of conveying arts and sciences” (“Les missions”).

¹ All source material for this research is originally written in French. All quotations are the author's translations. Short titles appear in the original French with translation in footnotes.

This chapter provides a chronology of the interactions between the French government, through the Office of the Prime Minister, and the Académie Française in order to establish the concept of “governmental language doctrine,” as well as the traditionalist view of the Académie. In publishing *circulaires* relative to the usage of inclusive language, at first simply feminization, the French government established the first precedent for governmental language doctrine which situated the government as an authority regarding the implementation and usage of inclusive language.

The 1980s

As mentioned above, the first *circulaire* distributed relative to the implementation of feminization and feminized terms in governmental correspondence was published in 1986, however, the involvement of the French government in feminization efforts began in 1984.

Created in 1984 by then Minister of Women’s Rights, Yvette Roudy, la Commission générale de terminologie et de néologie² organized an ensemble of linguistic scholars charged with adapting to the societal evolutions demanding feminized terms be developed, implemented, and recognized by governmental bodies. In creating this commission with the specific goal of developing methods and systems to change the way the French language operates, the Prime Minister and by extension the entirety of the French government pronounced their support and agreement with the feminization movement, insofar as the implementation of the modalities proposed by the Commission générale.

While it would be two years before the research of the Commission générale was published and officially made the recommendation of the French government, the Académie

² General Commission of Terminology and Neologisms

Française quickly took up the issue after the creation of the Commission générale. This action was, unsurprisingly, a result of the efforts of the French government to officially recognize adaptations to French orthography and recommend the usage of new terms, a task the Académie staunchly holds as its own. Published on June 14th, 1984, the declaration “Féminisation des noms de métiers et de fonctions”³ by Georges Dumézil and Claude Lévi-Strauss reproaches the ‘overreach’ of the creation of the Commission générale by Yvette Roudy. The corpus of this text is no longer available through the archives of the Académie Française, possibly because the position of the Académie has changed regarding the implementation of feminization. However, in 2014, a declaration was published detailing the actions of the Académie and representatives which includes a summary of the main points of this 1984 declaration (“La féminisation” 2014). Dumézil and Lévi-Strauss affirmed the position of the Académie as the ‘protector’ of the French language, as well as reaffirmed that there are only two genders in the French language; grammatically masculine and grammatically feminine.

The rules that govern the distribution of gender in our language date to lower Latin and include internal constraints within which one must compose. One of the constraints of the French language is that it only has two genders: in order to designate the common qualities of the two sexes, one gender must have been awarded a gender value in order to neutralize the difference between the two sexes. Latin heritage opted for the masculine.

A defense for the grammatical gender binary has been proposed - the Latin origins of the French language. Dumézil and Lévi-Strauss held that as the Latin language chose the grammatically masculine gender to function as ‘gender-neutral,’ the grammatically masculine gender similarly functions as ‘gender-neutral’ in French, echoing the golden rule of French grammar that “masculine always trumps feminine.” Dumézil and Lévi-Strauss further warn that attempts to change French grammar and orthography will result in “confusion and disorder”

³ “Feminization of job titles and functions”

when attempting to communicate (“La féminisation” 2014). While this declaration is no longer available and the representatives of the Académie Française have adapted to the recommendations of the French government and popular usage, the declaration of 1984 still represents the official setting of the traditionalist precedent. In affirming the gender binary, the ‘gender neutrality’ of the grammatically masculine gender, and accusing feminization efforts of creating confusion and destroying the ‘purity’ of the French language, the representatives of the Académie firmly aligned themselves with traditional grammatical and patriarchal ideals. As the Académie is not specifically a branch of the French government, this action falls under cultural language doctrine, distinguishing traditionalist views from progressive views.

In the official establishment of governmental language doctrine the “Circulaire du 11 mars 1986 relative à la féminisation des noms de métier, fonction, grade ou titre”⁴ was published in 1986 in *Le Journal Officiel de la République Française*. It provided the modalities developed by the Commission générale, as well as pronounced the desire of the Office of the Prime Minister, Laurent Fabius, that these modes of feminization be implemented in daily governmental use. The publication is short, merely two paragraphs expressing support for the research of the Commission générale and a brief appendix detailing the proposed methods of feminization. A translation of the portion of this *circulaire* expressing the desire of then Prime Minister, Laurent Fabius, is as follows.

I ask that you ensure the usage of these terms:

- In decrees, orders, *circulaires*, instructions and ministerial directives
- In correspondence and documents that emanate from administrations, services, or public establishments of the State
- In business texts and contracts of which the State or public establishments of the State are a part
- In works relative to teaching, to training, or to research utilized in these establishments, institutions, or organizations that depend on the State, are under

⁴ “Circulaire from March 11th, 1986, relative to the feminization of titles of jobs, functions, ranks, or positions”

the authority of the State, or are subject to the control of the State, or benefit from the financial support of the state.

The above recommendations are vast and include almost all types of governmental and state-supported correspondence or publication. The basic modes of feminization that were proposed in this *circulaire* are still the basis for feminization today and are still the standard held by the French government. The Commission générale of 1984, directed by Benoîte Groult, developed and proposed several linguistic modalities for feminizing terms that previously had only one form, the masculine form. It is important to note that the developments proposed in 1986 by the Commission générale are primarily based in orthography and ways to adapt the spelling of existing masculine terms to create an equivalent feminine term. There is no mention of neutralization, nor propositions of inserting other characters, such as the *point-médian*⁵ or the *trait d'union*⁶, to indicate a plural subject that includes both the grammatically masculine and grammatically feminine genders. The primary recommendation of this *circulaire* is the utilization of the grammatically feminine article before a grammatically masculine job, function, grade, or title without modification to the orthography of the term (i.e. *une ingénieur* to refer to a woman engineer, while *ingénieur* is still a grammatically masculine noun).

The impact of this *circulaire* on the visibility and implementation of feminized terms cannot be overstated. The desire to set a positive precedent regarding grammatical gender equality between men and women is clear here. After Laurent Fabius and the Office of the Prime Minister officially recognized feminization efforts, the implementation of feminized terms and neologism development moved from the work of “fringe” feminist and inclusivity movements to

⁵ A hyphen or dot placed in between noun and adjectival endings indicating that both the grammatically masculine and grammatically feminine are included in the subject, see appendix

⁶ A dash, used similarly to the hyphen, see appendix

the public eye, especially to those individuals working within and for the government. The research and linguistic development commission and corresponding *circulaire* represent that the French government recognized the desire for equality between men and women, therefore creating governmental language doctrine, i.e. an official recommendation from the Prime Minister to implement a certain type of language and practical areas to implement said doctrine.

The 1990s

Activists would have to wait twelve years after the initial publication of the March 11th *circulaire* for the issue of feminization to be taken up once again by the French government. The declaration of 1984 by the Académie Française merely expressed the disapproval of the representatives of the Académie regarding the attempt by the French government to implement feminization, but with the publication of the official recommendations in 1986 through the first *circulaire*, feminization had entered the public sphere. However, with the publication of the “Circulaire du 6 mars 1998 relative à la féminisation des noms de métier, fonction, grade ou titre,”⁷ a new Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin, re-established the positive recommendation of the French government regarding the implementation of feminized terms. Lionel Jospin pronounced his disapproval that the rules of feminization proposed in 1986 were applied only to those women working in the government who fought for the usage of feminized terms and his desire that the usage of feminization “enters irrevocably into our morals” (Jospin 3565). This *circulaire* also announced the establishment of a new study regarding the usage of feminized terms. This new Commission générale would work from the methods proposed in 1984 and the new research was to be published later in the year 1998. Additionally, l’Institut national de la langue française

⁷ “Circulaire from March 6th, 1998, relative to the feminization of titles for jobs, functions, ranks, or position”

would be compiling a guide of feminized terms used in other francophone countries that would be codified and then applied to feminization usages in France. Before the results of this new research would be published and made available, Jospin again counseled that the rules of feminization proposed in the 1986 *circulaire* be rigorously applied by governmental officials “in the services functioning under your authority and applied in all texts carrying your [government officials’] signature” (Jospin 3565). In adding this recommendation as the last line, Jospin placed the responsibility of implementing feminized terms on all government officials, not simply as the responsibility of the ambiguous ‘government and branches thereof.’ Feminization had now become an issue on the individual level within government officials. Additionally, this reproaching of the lack of usage of feminized terms represents once again the active place of the Office of the Prime Minister in establishing governmental language doctrine and the ability of the Prime Minister to address issues such as feminization, even if the issue is only addressed within official government offices. This fact is particularly striking, given that twelve years had passed since this initial *circulaire* publication and fourteen since the creation of the first commission. A precedent had been established for the Prime Minister to address feminization and reaffirm the place of the French government as a positive champion of the feminization rules proposed in 1984.

Although the new round of research and establishment of the feminization rules was not made available until 1999, the result was far from the initial rules published in 1986. A publication of the Centre national de la recherche scientifique de l’Institut national de la langue française, *Femme j’écris ton nom....Guide d’aide à la féminisation des noms de métiers, titres, grades et fonctions*⁸ is a comprehensive work of more than 100 pages. The study was directed by

⁸ *Woman, I write your name...Guide to assist the feminization of titles for jobs, ranks or functions*

Bernard Cerquiglini and comprised a committee of four specialists, all of which were women. In a short preface of two pages, Jospin once again offers an official recommendation to the usage of the rules of feminization proposed in *Femme, j'écris ton nom*. While the body of this work is most applicable to strictly linguistic studies of feminization modalities, *Femme, j'écris ton nom* as a whole still represents an important step for the status of feminized terms. Covering the expanse of discussions regarding determiners (*le, la, un, une*, etc.), words from languages other than French, abbreviations, general nomenclature, and orthography, this work stands as an official recommendation of the French government for feminization terms. It is not only a recommendation, however, but a reference point for questions, debates, and specificities that were not previously covered in general *circulaires*. In fact, the guide is still in use today within the French government and still serves as the model for feminization within the government (Flückiger 85-96). Additionally, the title of the guide (*Femme, j'écris ton nom*) is a reference to a 1942 lyric poem by Paul Eluard titled "Liberté, j'écris ton nom"⁹ (Eluard). In naming the guide in such a way, the Office of the French Prime Minister implies the freedom that will be awarded to women when they are able to adjust the French language to accurately refer to themselves.

The continued usage of a guide published in 1998 for over twenty years presents a situation of pros and cons. Regarding the positive, this shining example of governmental language doctrine solidified the importance of feminization within the government and assured that feminization would not simply fall out of practice after another ten years. Instead of a *circulaire* announcement of 500 words published on page 4,000 of the *Journal officiel de la République Française*, this guide is accessible and readily available to government officials and the public alike. Less positively, the guide does not agree with current efforts regarding

⁹ "Freedom, I write your name"

neutralization and has not been adapted to meet the evolving demands and questions of inclusive language. The guide recognizes that the French language offers only two grammatical gender choices and recognizes the desire of activists, both feminists and champions of neutralization alike, to enjoy the usage of a grammatically gender neutral option. The opinions put forth in *Femme, j'écris ton nom* are quite similar to those offered by Dumézil and Lévi-Strauss in 1984: the grammatically masculine gender is in fact gender neutral. The committee members for *Femme, j'écris ton nom* designate the grammatically masculine gender as “générique” or “generic” (3-45), differing slightly from Dumézil and Lévi-Strauss who simply offer that there is no distinction between the grammatically masculine and the grammatically gender-neutral.

Regardless of these shortcomings, the guide is still a remarkable example of the desire of individuals working within the French government to both recognize public demands for feminization and rise spectacularly to the occasion. This recognition of neutralization efforts marks an important step for the recognition of neutralization efforts in regards to inclusive language, regardless of the reaffirmation that the grammatically masculine gender functions as gender neutral. Previous *circulaires* mention only feminization efforts and the declaration of the Académie of 1984 does not refer to neutralization as separate from feminization, simply as a subset. This recognition marks the beginning of the emergence of neutralization alongside feminization, creating what we know now as “inclusive language.”

The 2010s

After the publication of *Femme, j'écris ton nom* in 1999, another relatively long period passed without governmental action regarding inclusive language. This is not surprising, since the guide was developed to serve as a reference point for questions and there simply was not a need for further development at the time. The usage of inclusive language became more and

more popular in general society, as a result of these government actions, but the debate regarding the usage and implementation of inclusive language on the public stage stayed relatively quiet (Flückiger 85-96).

While it did not specifically refer to the implementation of specific feminized terms, it is still important to note the publication of “Circulaire no 5575/SG du 21 février 2012 relative à la suppression des termes ‘Mademoiselle’, ‘nom de jeune fille’, ‘nom patronymique’, ‘nom d’épouse’ et ‘nom d’époux’ des formulaires et correspondances des administrations” (Fillon).¹⁰ With the publication of this *circulaire*, yet another Prime Minister established positive precedent regarding inclusive language. In removing the term for an unmarried woman (‘Mademoiselle’), the barrier of the status of marriage between men and women was removed. Before, unmarried women were specifically singled out as unmarried, while men were permitted to keep such information private. Additionally, the removal of ‘nom de jeune fille’ and ‘nom patronymique’ to be replaced with simply ‘nom de famille’ (‘family name’) also represent the removal of the husband as the most important member of a married couple and of the assumption that all families include a man. ‘Nom d’époux/d’épouse’ were removed to allow for the inclusion of widowers or divorced individuals, however, the removal of gendered terms still represents a victory for neutralization. Most importantly, this *circulaire* established a clear equality between ‘Madame’ and ‘Monsieur’, by no longer distinguishing between unmarried and married women.

In 2014, the usage of inclusive language was begrudgingly recognized by the Académie Française. In the same declaration that recounts the work of Dumézil and Lévi-Strauss that is no longer available, the Académie presents an affronted reminder of the position of representatives

¹⁰ “Circulaire no 5575/SG of February 21st, 2012, relative to the removal of the terms ‘Mademoiselle’, ‘young girl’s name’, ‘family name of the father’, ‘name of women spouse’ and ‘name of man spouse’ from administrative forms and correspondences.”

of the Académie as the “protectors” of the French language and again admonishes the actions taken by the French government to establish language doctrine (“La féminisation” 2014). The representatives reject certain forms of feminization recommended in *Femme, j’écris ton nom*, and withheld their precedent that the grammatically masculine gender is in fact generic and is quite simple to put into usage. Petulantly, the French government rebukes the publication of *Femme, j’écris ton nom*, saying there is no precedent allowing the government “the singular authority or power to modify French vocabulary or grammar” (“La féminisation” 2014).

However, the Académie concedes to the usage of feminized terms in “daily life,” in the event that specific individuals request the usage of feminized terms. These terms may be feminized or grammatically masculine terms that fulfill a ‘gender neutral’ function. It is important to note that the declaration places ‘feminized’ within parentheses when referring to terms that have been subject to feminization, clearly marking out feminization as a practice not recognized by the Académie. While previous views were reaffirmed in this declaration, such as the neutrality of the grammatically masculine, this declaration still represents slight progress in the recognition of feminized terms as part of the ‘living’ language. Although the tone of this declaration is quite negative, the Académie Française has nonetheless recognized that cultural language doctrine is very much alive and well.

The next step in the Académie’s dance around inclusive language came in October 2017. In a short declaration entitled “Déclaration de l’Académie Française sur l’Écriture dite ‘inclusive,’ ”¹¹ the representatives of the Académie firmly placed themselves against the usage of “inclusive language” and warned of the future of the French language (“Déclaration de l’Académie” 2017). In the context of this declaration, the representatives are referring to

¹¹ “Declaration of the Académie Française regarding Writing said to be ‘inclusive’.”

neutralization efforts, including the introduction of a gender neutral pronoun, new methods of orthography, and the insertion of dashes to indicate gender neutrality. Feminization is not included in this declaration. A short translation of the body of the declaration follows.

The multiplication of orthographic and syntactical marks that [neutralization] entails brings about a [French] language that is split in its expression, creating a confusion that bemoans illegibility. We fail to see what is the sought purpose [of inclusive writing] and how this goal could surmount the practical obstacles of writing, of reading - visual or out loud - and of pronunciation. This [neutralization] would weigh down the tasks of teachers. This would complicate [the tasks] of readers even further.

More than any other institution, the Académie Française is sensitive to evolutions and to innovations of language, due to its mission to codify these. In this instance, it is less in the capacity of “protector” of the norm than in guarantor of the future that the Académie is sounding the alarm so that our nation is held accountable before these future generations: before this aberration of “inclusive,” the French language from now on finds itself in mortal peril.

After these remarks, several questions are posed, such as how students of French (francophone and students learning French as a second language alike) will learn to adapt to the orthographic changes, and the Académie claims that such changes to orthography will result in a decreased sense of patriotism regarding the French language. This declaration perfectly frames the issues facing the widespread implementation of neutral language, such as that it is too complicated, too difficult to teach and read, and is far from the French of the Académie Française that adheres to strict, traditional grammar guidelines. Falling in line with the traditionalist precedent set in 1984 and 2014 and further establishing the traditionalist cultural language doctrine, the representatives of the Académie once again placed themselves against the introduction of grammatically gender-neutral language. The usage of strong language such as “mortal peril” and “aberration” clearly indicates the displeasure of the representatives of the Académie, their continued refusal to accept neutralization efforts and meet demand for truly grammatically gender-neutral language (“Déclaration de l’Académie,” 2017). This demand is represented here through the continued efforts of feminist activists regarding feminization, as

well as the non-governmental resources regarding neutralization that is discussed in Chapter 4.

Almost one month later, the Office of the Prime Minister released a contradictory *circulaire* regarding the usage of feminization and neutralization within government correspondence. On November 21, 2017, Prime Minister Edouard Philippe released the “Circulaire du 21 novembre 2017 relative aux règles de féminisation et de rédaction des textes publiés au *Journal officiel de la République française*.”¹² After stating that the government is “resolutely” engaged in the promotion of equality between women and men and the fight against ingrained stereotypes, the Prime Minister firmly recommends that the grammatically masculine form function as the ‘générique’ form. While the *circulaire* recommends the continued usage of the rules presented in *Femme, j’écris ton nom* and the usage of dual nouns when discussing people in general (i.e. instead of simply using the grammatically masculine plural *les Français*, when referring to French people, this construction requires the usage of the grammatically masculine and the grammatically feminine *les Françaises et les Français*), the recommendation regarding neutralization comes at the end. In agreement with the Académie Française’s declaration regarding the “mortal peril” (“Déclaration de l’Académie” 2017), Philippe recommends the non-usage of “inclusive language”¹³ and advises that the grammatically masculine form is sufficient to represent all genders. Both the declaration in October and this *circulaire* claim that neutralization innovations are simply too difficult to read and will render government texts illegible. While the French government, through the arm of the Office of the Prime Minister, and the Académie seem to have been at odds with each other throughout this

¹² “Circulaire of November 21st, 2017 relative to the rules of feminization and the writing of texts published in *le Journal Officiel de la République Française*”

¹³ The “inclusive language” referenced in this document is what is referred to as “neutralization” efforts in this thesis.

historical review, here the respective governmental and cultural language doctrines conform to traditionalist views regarding neutralization, but the French government distinguishes itself in taking progressive actions, such as supporting the widespread implementation and official recommendation of feminization.

It would not be until 2019 that the traditionalist views of the Académie Française regarding feminization officially lined up with that of the French government. After a study was conducted by several representatives of the Académie, a twenty-page document was released that formally recognized the adoption of certain feminization innovations and specific ways of implementation (“La féminisation” 2019). Finally recognizing the growing number of French women and men demanding an official acknowledgment of feminized terms that were already used, the Académie officially accepted certain forms of feminization proposed in the 1986 *circulaire* and the 1999 *Femme, j’écris ton nom*, almost thirty years later.

Le Haut Conseil à L’Égalité Entre Les Femmes Et Les Hommes¹⁴

Created in 2013 by then French president François Hollande, le Haut Conseil à L’Égalité Entre Les Femmes Et Les Hommes first entered the public sphere with regards to equality and French citizenship. In 2017, the Conseil was given the new role of studying and publishing material relative to the “state of sexism in France” (“Présentation et missions”). This material may take the form of studies and cultural analysis, as well as the creation of formal recommendations to be given to the Prime Minister. It could be argued that the declarations of the Académie Française and the French government in 2017 against the usage of inclusive language were in response to publications from the Conseil. It is important to note that the

¹⁴ The High Council for Equality Between Women and Men

Conseil enjoys a special privilege in regards to the French government; while technically under the auspices of the office of the Prime Minister, the representatives of the Conseil are able to publish their own opinions that often are in dissent with the official stance of the office of the Prime Minister. The most prominent example of this is Philippe's 2017 *circulaire* discouraging the use of neutral language, something recommended and supported in the highest terms throughout the literature and publications of the Conseil. Publications from the Conseil occupy an ambiguous space between governmental and cultural language doctrine, allowing for the Conseil to set a cultural precedent, while at the same time making an official recommendation to the French government. These official recommendations come in the form of publications and announcements on the webpage of the Conseil and further, carry the logo of the French government and the words "République Française," connecting the opinions expressed in the Conseil's literature with the French government. This section focuses on analyses published by the Conseil regarding equality, one of their specialty areas, specifically two manuals published in 2016 and 2017 respectively regarding feminization and neutralization.

While regarding specifically the implementation of feminized terms and feminization innovations at a higher level, the *Guide pratique pour une communication publique sans stéréotype de sexe*¹⁵ published by the Haut Conseil in 2016 nonetheless is significant in the establishment of governmental and cultural precedent. This guide provides ten recommendations for speech free of stereotypes regarding sex which are

The elimination of all sexist expressions, the [grammatical] agreement of names of jobs, titles, ranks, and functions, the usage of the feminine and the masculine in messages addressed to both women and men, the usage of alphabetical order when reading a list [of names], the complete presentation of the identities of women and men, not asking women questions about their personal lives in the workplace, speaking of "women" instead of "the woman" and "human rights" instead of the rights of "mankind", the diversification

¹⁵ *Practical guide for a public communication free of stereotypes regarding sex*

of women's and men's representation, the attempt to bring the number of women and men in balance [in the workplace], and instructing professionals about these recommendations (*Guide pratique* 19).

Only a small part of this guide is focused on specifically the feminization of terms, the other chapters are a study of critical feminist theory and educational resources for professionals in the workplace. This first guide establishes the precedent of the government-sanctioned Conseil as an organization devoted to the promotion of women's rights in the workplace, specifically grammatical feminization.

In the following year, 2017, the Haut Conseil published the *Manuel d'écriture inclusive*¹⁶ under the direction of Raphaël Haddad. Specifically concerned with offering neutralization innovations and advice for their implementation, the *Manuel* contains much of the same introductory information as the *Guide pratique* published the year before and includes a significant contribution to the neutral language debate. The *Guide* has been updated twice since the original publication, once in 2018 and once in 2019. Updates included new responses to arguments proposed against neutral language and a renewed support for neutral language. The continued participation of the Haut Conseil in the debate regarding inclusive language, specifically neutralization, can be offered as proof of the importance and visibility of these issues within French culture. The most recent version of the *Manuel*, published in 2019, is referenced here.

Broken down into chapters, the *Manuel* provides a wealth of information, as well as resources for the professional world and for those simply searching for information about inclusive language alike. The three general conventions that have been developed and put into practice by the Haut Conseil are enumerated: “the grammatical gender agreement of names of

¹⁶ *Manual for the usage of inclusive language*

functions, ranks, jobs, and titles, the usage of the feminine and the masculine, instead of simply the masculine, the usage of “Womankind” and “Mankind” (Haddad 7). These conventions are discussed, defended, and the body of the work is presented. While the *Guide pratique* of 2016 concerns itself with laying out guidelines for feminization, the *Manuel* (even the original version) provides several tables that enumerate the ways of making adjectives, determiners, pronouns, and nouns gender neutral. The recommended strategy for adjectives and all nouns that did not previously possess a grammatically gender-neutral form is the usage of the hyphen or the dash to indicate that both the grammatically feminine and grammatically masculine genders are included.

In the last section entitled “Foire aux arguments,” the *Manuel* offers rebuttals to ten of the most common arguments against inclusive language, including the ‘neutrality’ of the grammatically masculine gender. Previously the French government and Académie Française had refused to acknowledge that the grammatically masculine gender is not sufficient to represent individuals of all genders. Perhaps most impactful in the positions of the Haut Conseil, the *Manuel* holds that this is not the case.

Regarding the argument of the generic masculine gender:

“The masculine is also the mark of the neutral. It represents women and men.”

In French, the [grammatically] neutral does not exist: a word is either masculine or feminine.

And otherwise, the usage of the masculine is not perceived as neutral, regardless of its intended usage, because it represents women less than a neutral gender (Haddad 20).

Additionally, the Conseil offers responses to the argument that French would become illegible with this implementation, pointing out that the hyphen and the dash are not the only methods of neutralization. Similarly striking is the response of the Haut Conseil regarding the distaste of the Académie Française for neutralization that “the French language is regulated by usage. If certain

institutions are effectively against inclusive language, these institutions do not have the power to forbid it” (Haddad 21).

Discussion

Codifying the values and views of both the Office of the Prime Minister and the Académie Française is not as simple as “the French government is progressive and the Académie is sexist.” While in fact both bodies have presented misogynistic and transphobic views regarding feminization and neutralization respectively, both have evolved over time to meet the demands of the francophone people, women or not. While it is true that the French government has repeatedly supported feminization efforts, it is important to note that the 1986 *circulaire* makes no reference to the implementation of a grammatically gender-neutral term other than the grammatically masculine, nor recommends orthographic innovations outside of simple changes to noun endings. Although the government has repeatedly recommended the continued usage of the rules brought forth in *Femme, j’écris ton nom*, in 2017 the usage of neutralization innovations was roundly discouraged. While slightly more complex, it is appropriate to say that the attitude of representatives of the French government has been largely progressive regarding the advancement of *feminization* and largely traditionalist regarding the development of *neutralization*.

In regards to the Académie Française, it would appear that representatives are strictly traditionalist and rebuke any and all attempts to change the French language, and recognize these changes only when it has become impossible not to formally acknowledge them, such as in the case of the most recent declaration in 2019. However, every declaration attempts to acknowledge the demand for equality between women and men and the ability of the French language to accommodate for equality. The issue lies in the mode of accommodation. The demand for neutral

innovations and neutral terms has not died out simply because the solution offered by the Académie that the grammatically masculine gender serves as a generic formulation is not sufficient. The paradox in the position that “masculine forms serve to represent both men and women” cannot be understated, while this position alienates those individuals who do not conform to the gender binary. In pronouncing their disapproval regarding the implementation of neutralization innovations, going so far as to accuse these innovations of placing the French language in “mortal peril,” representatives of the French government and the Académie have established a traditionalist governmental and cultural doctrine (“Déclaration de l’Académie” 2017).

However, the actions of the French government and the Académie Française, regulator of the French language, do not represent the views and positions of French and francophone societies as a whole, well-illustrated in the actions and publications of the Haut Conseil. While being under the auspice of the French government, the Conseil is able to publish material independently and impact cultural language doctrine. The microcosm of the Office of the Prime Minister, Le Haut Conseil à l’Égalité Entre Les Femmes et Les Hommes, and the Académie Française serve well to illustrate that the polemic of inclusive language in metropolitan France is highly contested, with a wide range of opinions and varying levels of acceptance and implementation. These initial discussions serve as a litmus test for the study of other aspects of francophone societies, while providing groundwork and reference material for activists today. Regardless of the actions of both the Académie Française and the French government, francophone individuals are able to choose which terms they would like to apply to themselves and how. Language cannot be simply controlled through declarations and dictionary publications, it is a living thing, a phenomenon recognized by the Académie.

CHAPTER 3

THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT AND THE OFFICE QUÉBÉCOIS DE LA LANGUE FRANÇAISE

Introduction to the French Language in Canada

While the French language has enjoyed official status in the present-day country of Canada since 1910, the French language has been present there since the beginnings of French colonization under Jacques Cartier in the sixteenth century. French-speaking provinces were established and while “la Nouvelle-France”¹⁷ would undergo a substantive British colonial occupation, the federation officially obtained sovereignty in 1962. Today a federation under a constitutional monarchy of ten provinces and three territories where both French and English are recognized as official languages, Canada hosts the third largest population of French speakers in the world, following mainland France and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Wood 2019).

While during sixteenth-century colonization the French spoken in the territories of “la Nouvelle-France” was similar in accent, vocabulary, and semantic structures to the French ‘of the king,’ or of mainland France, this North-American language methodically evolved over the course of the almost five hundred years during which it has been present in North America. Today often known as *québécois*, the definition that is employed here is ‘accent,’ in an effort to avoid designating French spoken in metropolitan France as grammatically or culturally superior to forms of the language employed in other parts of the world due to French colonization. The designation of *québécois* carries its own stereotypes and conventions, usually that of a nasal pronunciation and a grammar and syntax that are much closer to the French spoken by sixteenth-century French colonizers than the French spoken today in Paris, Lyon, or Marseille, for

¹⁷ Title given to the territory under French colonial control, “New-France.”

example. Due to the proximity of the large English-speaking population in the United States and the similarly large portion of Canadian society that speaks English, Canadian French is also marked by Anglicisms and English-influenced grammatical structures that are not present in mainland French. Differences in vocabulary, syntactical and grammatical structures, and accent have led to many French-Canadian films and television programs available in mainland French being automatically subtitled with a ‘translation’ of the Canadian French into a French that is more comprehensible to an audience in metropolitan France. However, it is important to note that while there exist considerable differences between the accents spoken in French Canada and in mainland France, Canadian French does not occupy an inferior linguistic place than the French language does in its home country. Canada is an officially bilingual country with a vast array of laws and doctrines regarding the usage and continued teaching of both French and English. A comparison can be drawn between American English and British Received Pronunciation English; vast linguistic differences exist, however, they are simply variations of the same language.

La Charte de la Langue Française and L’Office Québécois de la Langue Française¹⁸

Although French is spoken throughout Canada, indeed Montreal is the fourth largest French-speaking city in the world, there is one province where French enjoys special status as the sole official language: Quebec. It is for this reason that Canadian French is often noted as *québécois*, making a reference to the province. Due to the organization of the country as a constitutional monarchy with a federation of provinces, provinces have a significant degree of local power and ability to make decrees at a local level, allowing the province of Quebec to enact

¹⁸ Charter of the French Language, Quebecois Office of the French Language

into law *La Charte de la langue française* in 1977. Although only one linguistic degree in a chronology extending from 1910 to the early 2000s, “la loi 101”¹⁹ has had the most drastic effects on the usage of the French language in Quebec. The Charte “imposes the exclusive usage of French in public signage and commercial advertisements, extends ‘francization’ programs to all businesses employing more than 50 people, restricts access to school conducted in English to only the children of whom one parent received their elementary school education in English in Quebec, and only the French version of laws holds official status” and established French as the sole official language of the province and provincial government (“Chronologie de la législation linguistique”). While the article identifying the French version of laws as the sole official legislation was declared unconstitutional two years following the *Charte*, the other aspects of the legislation are still in effect today.

As there exists the Académie Française in France, charged with the defense and establishment of the grammatical rules of the French language, the Office québécois de la langue française (OQLF) was created in 1961 under the government of Jean Lesage. While this body has undergone slight evolutions since its conception, at the time known as simply the “Office de la langue française,” here the current title is employed. A similar provincial government body, the primary missions of the Office are “to define and to spearhead the Quebecois political agenda in regard to official linguistic standards and terminology, as well as the francization of the Administration and its bodies, and to ensure that the French language is the habitual and normal language of work, communication, business, and affairs of the Administration and its bodies (“Mission et rôle”). While the Office does assert itself in the realm of linguistic politics, it is also a normalization body, much like the Académie Française. These two bodies serve much the same

¹⁹ “The 101st law”, this is the name by which the Charte is commonly referred to in Canada and Quebec.

function and are both considered to be authorities on the French language in terms of grammar, syntax, and orthography. This ‘normalization’ takes the form of making official decrees and recommendations regarding the usage of the French language in terms of grammar, orthography, syntax, lexicons, and general vocabulary. It is the official source for what is grammatically ‘correct’ in the French language. While the Office is only a governmental body at the provincial level, it is still important to note that its decrees and recommendations make up an important part of the governmental language doctrine in Quebec and Canada as a whole. In order to diffuse these recommendations, the Office has created and continues to update an immense database called the “Banque de dépannage linguistique” ([BDL](http://bdl.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/bdl/)) which can be best translated as a “linguistic toolbox” (<<http://bdl.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/bdl/>>). The BDL allows individuals to enter questions related to grammar, orthography, etc., and search through thousands of articles updated and created by the eight members of the Office. While general grammatical information is included here, there is an immense array of topics covered that do not shy away from what is not considered to be the ‘correct’ usage of the French language. Some of the topics considered to be taboo by the Académie Française such as Anglicisms, English-influenced grammatical structures, and inclusive language, including feminization and neutralization, are discussed by the individuals of the Office through the BDL. While the recommendations of the Office are to be considered governmental language doctrine of the province of Quebec, it is important to note the progressive attitude in a wide array of topics discussed by a linguistic normalization body.

Quebec: Forty Years Ahead

In the 1960s and on throughout the 1970s, the attitudes of individuals living in Quebec changed drastically in regard to society; a specifically Québécois attitude began to develop, unions protecting workers began to take shape, the push to establish French as the sole official

language of the province was gaining widespread support, and women saw their position in society begin to evolve to include positions in the government and outside of the traditional ‘women’s work.’ As a result of the so-called ‘Révolution Tranquille’²⁰ and the mixing of a developing Québécois attitude alongside the raised status of women, Québécois women’s rights activists found themselves in the situation to begin discussing the linguistic status of women in the French language ten years before the question would be taken up by the government of Laurent Fabius in 1984 with the creation of the Commission Générale and forty years before feminization would be officially recognized by the normalization body of France, the Académie Française.

Historians often mark the turning point in the Révolution Tranquille to be the election of René Lévesque as Prime Minister of the province of Quebec in 1976. The founding member of the Parti Québécois, a political party devoted to the sovereignty of the province and supporting the sovereignty of Quebec in the country of Canada, Lévesque also held the establishment of French as the sole official language in the province as a core of his election platform. With Lévesque’s win in 1976 additionally came the election of eight women to various positions in the provincial government which in turn posed the question: how to refer to these women using their proper, elected titles while observing the grammatical rules of the French language? It was at this moment that the government of René Lévesque called on the services of the Office québécois de la langue française to study this question and propose a course of action. This action represents an important milestone in governmental language doctrine; that of a government taking an active position in establishing language doctrine and attempting to establish a certain level of equality

²⁰ ‘Quiet Revolution,’ a social movement that took place during the 1960s and 1970s in Quebec, primarily concerned with women’s rights, the status of the French language, and the separation of church and state.

in a grammatically unequal language, such as French, by utilizing the services of a normalization body. The creation of the Commission Générale in 1984 and the *circulaire* of 1986 from the Office of the Prime Minister, Laurent Fabius, certainly established the desire of the French government to support and establish feminization practices within the *government*. These actions were firmly rebuked by the Académie Française and remained within the support of this normalization authority until the 2000s. Conversely, a terminology expert from the Office québécois de la langue française was assigned to study the question of feminization in the French language and make an official recommendation that would be published and supported by the government.

This expert called upon to make a recommendation regarding the feminization of official titles for women elected officials was Marie-Éva de Villers, a terminology expert and member of the Office at the time. In an interview for Radio Canada with Maryse Jobin, De Villers explains that she was tasked with studying specifically the usage of terms such as *Madame le Député*, *Madame le Ministre*, and *Madame le Président*. When referring to an elected official in French, it is common to use the designation of *Madame* or *Monsieur* followed by the individual's title, hence *Monsieur le Président* if one was speaking to a male president of an agency or country. The question posed to De Villers in 1976 was how to adapt these terms in order to correctly refer to the eight women who had just been elected to positions and would be referred to with a masculine title and if it would be grammatically possible to refer to these elected women using feminine terms, such as *Madame la Ministre* or *Madame la Présidente*. Over the course of her research, De Villers uncovered the reason why these titles had not been adapted before 1976, as certainly women held elected positions before 1976. Before the question had been formally introduced, designations using a feminized term such as *Madame la Ministre*, and *Madame la*

Présidente made reference to the “Madame” as the spouse of a minister or president. Thus, women elected officials were referred to using the grammatical masculine article and title in order to avoid designating the elected official as a spouse. According to De Villers, “when women received a higher [governmental] position in France, they did not want to be taken for someone’s wife...they had the title, they had the position, and so they referred to themselves as *Madame l’ambassadeur* so that there was not any confusion” (De Villers).

It was De Villers’s conclusion that “the [grammatically] feminine is completely normal and desirable” in the context of the usage of the feminine article and feminized title to refer to women elected officials and that the “misogynistic” designation of women with a grammatically feminine title as simply the spouse of a male elected official did not fall in line with the vision of equality between women and men that Québécois society had been working towards (De Villers). In 1979, De Villers made her official recommendation to the Assemblée Nationale de Québec,²¹ the primary legislative body of the province, that these terms referring to women elected officials be feminized and officially recognized as grammatically correct in French. The recommendation was accepted by the Assemblée and her recommendation was published in the *Gazette Officielle du Québec* on July 28, 1979.²² This publication mirrors that of various *circulaires* in the *Journal Officiel de la République Française*; both are the official publications of the Québécois provincial government and the French government respectively. Although according to De Villers, it would still be another decade before the feminization of titles and jobs in French would be fully accepted by Québécois society, the acceptance came far more quickly and with significantly less backlash than in France, where the feminization of titles was not

²¹ Quebec National Assembly

²² This edition of the *Gazette Officielle du Québec* no longer available through the *Gazette*’s official archive. The publication is mentioned by De Villers in her 2019 interview with Radio Canada International.

officially recognized until the 2000s by the Académie Française.

Although the Académie Française was slower on the uptake of the widespread feminization of terms, De Villers mentions further that the linguistic work done in Quebec regarding the implementation of feminized forms of titles such as *Madame la Ministre* affected change in French linguistic policy. She attributes the publication of the “Circulaire du 6 mars 1998 relative à la féminisation des noms de métier, fonction, grade ou titre” by the Office of the French Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin, to the support that feminized titles have received in Quebec. At the time of publication in 1998, Jospin had just been elected and was faced with the same issue as the Parti Québécois in 1976; women had been elected to high offices with corresponding titles which did not grammatically correspond to their gender identity. The 1998 *circulaire* rebuked the representatives of the French government for the lack of implementation of feminized terms in government correspondence and offered continued support for the rules for feminization presented by the Commission Générale in 1986. De Villers stated that it was these elected officials who having seen the elevated linguistic status of women in Quebec demanded why they were still being referred to by grammatically masculine terms when the usage of the grammatically feminine term had been widely accepted in 1976 in Canada.

While this proposal and acceptance of the feminization of specific job titles took place officially in 1976, it was not until 1988 that an official guide would be made available to the public regarding the feminization of terms, albeit the publication of a complete, government-sanctioned guide came two years after the French government formally recognized the validity of feminized terms for the first time in the 1986 *circulaire*. The Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec,²³ responding to demands for a formalized and official mode of feminization in writing

²³ Quebecois Minister of Education

after the official acceptance by the Assemblée Nationale du Québec and the publication of the recommendation of De Villers in 1979, directed the project to Hélène Dumais, a Québécois linguist and expert in women's studies. Originally Dumais was tasked with studying "the question of the feminization of titles and starting dialogue regarding the subject in general, in regard to the de-sexualization of school teaching materials and of the feminization of certain non-traditional positions" (Dumais 169). While "de-sexualization" may often refer to the sterilization of women, the dialogue surrounding the de-sexualization of the French language in Québécois linguistic literature is common and has indeed been part of the landscape since 1988. Referring to the removal of overly-sexualized ideals and societal stereotypes regarding women, the phenomenon of de-sexualization here mixes the societal and abstract discussion of women's rights and feminism with the linguistic discussion of equality. Dumais's guide would appear in 1988.

In her guide, *Pour un genre à part entière : guide pour la rédaction de textes non-sexistes*,²⁴ Dumais recommended "non-sexist [modes of] writing," which must include both the feminization of titles and the de-sexualization of all texts (170).²⁵ Two principal methods of feminizing are proposed, that of presenting both the grammatically feminine term and grammatically masculine term at the same time or the usage of the *trait d'union*²⁶ and that of the implementation of, when possible, the neutral or generic formulation. The example given by Dumais is that of the word "enseignant," which means "teacher." Generally, when referring to a

²⁴ For a complete gender : a guide for writing non-sexist texts, referring to a 'gender' that places both women and men on equal status and includes provisions for gender neutralization

²⁵ In her 1992 article entitled *Pour un genre à part entière*, Dumais discusses the creation and adaption of her guide of the same title, published in 1988. This quote comes from her 1992 article, her guide is additionally discussed.

²⁶ A dash placed in between noun and adjectival endings indicating that both the grammatically masculine and grammatically feminine are included in the subject, see appendix

group of teachers, the traditional designation is “les enseignants,” which is the grammatically masculine plural and ‘generic’ form of the noun and does not make any reference to women teachers. According to the first method proposed by Dumais, the feminized formulation is “les enseignantes et les enseignants,” which includes both the grammatically masculine and the grammatically feminine respectively. However, the second proposal is that of complete desexualisation of the phrase. Dumais proposes instead of referring to men and women teachers, the usage of a neutral form, such as “le personnel enseignant.” While there is still grammatical gender attached to “le personnel enseignant,” the grammatical gender does not make any reference to the gender identity of the teachers mentioned, simply the teaching staff in general. It is here that Québécois inclusive language literature diverges once again from that of the French Office of the Prime Minister. In 1988 the Ministère de l’Éducation du Québec officially recognized the need for neutralization and gender-neutral constructions in the French language. Being that French is a binary language, these individuals are forced to choose between the grammatically feminine and the grammatically masculine when referring to themselves using personal pronouns, possessive adjectives, job titles, and all other nouns and articles in French that have a grammatical gender. There is not a singular gender-neutral French term, whereas in English, the usage of the singular “they” has been formally recognized as grammatically correct, cementing the formal usage of neutral language in English grammar (“They, pronoun”). Feminization places the emphasis on increasing the availability and ease of usage of grammatically feminine terms, while neutralization innovations seek to offer forms that are neither grammatically masculine nor grammatically feminine.

Additionally, Dumais officially recommends the usage of the hyphen or dash to designate that adjectives are inclusive of both the grammatically feminine and grammatically masculine

genders, an innovation that has still not been formally recognized by the French Office of the Prime Minister. The usage of the hyphen is recommended by le Haut Conseil à l'Égalité entre les Femmes et Les Hommes, a subset of the French Prime Minister's Office, in their *Manuel d'écriture inclusive*. The usage of neutralized terms and constructions was additionally rebuked by the Académie Française in 2017 ("Déclaration de l'Académie"). In establishing the precedents for feminization and neutralization in 1988, Quebec occupies a progressive space in the domain of governmental language doctrine wherein proposals to alter grammar and syntax in order to give certain groups (women and gender non-conforming individuals) linguistic equality are welcomed and accepted by high government authorities.

Recommendations of the Office québécois de la langue française

As previously discussed, the Office maintains and updates a database of linguistic resources to answer questions regarding grammar, syntax, and orthography in the French language. The articles and grammatical recommendations published here are official documents from the Office, a governmental branch of the province of Quebec.

Regarding feminization and neutral writing, the Banque de dépannage linguistique offers articles in six sub-categories such as neutral writing, examples of feminized texts for reference, how to use the *doublet*,²⁷ how to feminize nouns and titles, lists of masculine and feminine nouns, and further reference material ("Féminisation et rédaction épïcène"). The ensemble of articles concerning feminization and neutral writing includes ninety separate articles that discuss and elaborate on feminization and 'neutral writing' in French. The specifics and intricacies are not discussed here. The recommendations made by the Office mirror those of Dumais in 1988

²⁷ A feminization technique, involving the inclusion of both the grammatically masculine and the grammatically feminine, see appendix.

and those made by the French Haut Conseil in the *Manuel d'écriture inclusive*.

However, it is important to note that the differences between 'neutral writing' and 'inclusive language' become less clear when discussing Québécois language doctrine as neutralization has played a part in the overall 'inclusive language' discussion in Quebec since 1988. Forms of 'neutral writing' such as that proposed by Dumais to use a neutral formulation instead of a feminized formulation often factor into what is considered to be feminization. The simplest untangling of this web of terms and references becomes even more difficult when the governmental language doctrine in France is considered, where 'neutral writing' as it is discussed by the Office is the same as all other neutralization innovations. Québécois governmental language doctrine separates 'neutral writing' (i.e. neutral formulations such as "le personnel enseignant") and neutralization neologisms, while French language doctrine does not. It is for this reason that the Office discusses neologisms and other similar neutralization efforts in a separate set of articles and why 'neutral writing' is discussed alongside feminization.

It is additionally necessary to note the differences in accessibility and availability of resources regarding how to go about implementing feminization and neutralization practices. While it is quite simple to access the manuals and guides published by the Conseil in France, these guides do not fully occupy the abstract space of governmental language doctrine, as the precedent has been set by the Office of the Prime Minister to establish what is supported by the French government through the publication of *circulaires*. These guides similarly are not publications of the French linguistic normalization body, the Académie Française, and while they are important resources, they do not carry the same weight as a recommendation or publication from the Académie. The aforementioned *circulaires* are similarly easily accessible as they are part of the public domain as publications in the *Journal officiel de la République Française*.

However, there exists no centralized portal such as the Quebec BDL in order to access them. Regarding the Académie Française, declarations are available on its webpage, but, certain declarations that express unsavory opinions regarding the implementation of feminization practices have been removed or are no longer available. In France, there exists no such portal where official recommendations from a linguistic normalization body regarding how to feminize nouns, how to employ ‘neutral writing,’ and general resources are available.

While the Académie Française has staunchly refused to recognize neutralization neologisms and innovations, it has also offered no recommendation for the contrary outside of the simple statement that the grammatically masculine gender is in fact a grammatically gender-neutral formulation (“La féminisation” 2014). As the Office québécois de la langue française makes the distinction that under the umbrella of ‘neutralization,’ there is ‘neutral writing’ and neutralization neologisms and other innovations, these neologisms and innovations are discussed in a different section of the BDL. In an article titled “Désigner les personnes non binaires,”²⁸ the Office recognizes the usage of neologisms and the neo-pronoun *iel* (replacing *il* and *elle*) by gender non-conforming individuals and further recognizes that gender identity and grammatical gender are deeply linked in the French language. Regarding the usage of these neologisms and terms, “the Office does not advise the usage of these writing practices. No general changes concerning the masculine/feminine grammatical distinction is on the horizon” (“Désigner les personnes non-binaires”). While this disclaimer may seem discouraging and it is true that the Office does not officially make a recommendation to utilize these specific neologisms and terms, the recognition of the requirement to continue to develop and codify the French language to meet these demands is an important step in governmental language doctrine. Further, the Office does

²⁸ “How to designate non-binary peoples.”

not end the article with discouraging the usage of neologisms and neo-pronouns, but, offers its own proposition. Generally, the Office refers to the ‘neutral writing’ practices outlined alongside feminization, but similarly recognizes that these practices do not extend to discussing individuals, only groups. In the case of needing to refer to a gender non-conforming individual, the Office recommends “to omit gender markers and feminine or masculine civil titles, such as *Madame* or *Monsieur*” (“Désigner les personnes non-binaires”). This omission of gender markers takes the form of the omission of the article in French, which if the neutralized term is being employed, would allow for a completely gender neutral designation. Continuing the precedents set in 1976 and 1988, the Office québécois de la langue française has carried on the inclusion of the neutralization discussion in its official publications, placing Quebec in a highly progressive position regarding both the status of women and gender non-conforming individuals regarding governmental language doctrine.

Canadian Federal Government Resources

Due to the highly visible nature of the inclusive language discussion in Canada, specifically in Quebec since the 1970s, literature and publications exist regarding inclusive language from other governmental offices outside of simply the Office québécois de la langue française and the Ministère de l’Éducation du Québec. Until now, the governmental language doctrine treated in this thesis has been specific to the region of Quebec where the sole official language is French. However, French is one of the two Canadian national languages, resulting in a variety of different linguistic resources from the federal government. The specific articles and resources that are discussed here are available through the “Portail linguistique du Canada,”²⁹

²⁹ Canadian Linguistic Portal.

which is available on the official government of Canada webpage (<<https://www.noslangues-ourlangues.gc.ca/>>). The portal functions as a counterpart to the Banque de dépannage linguistique (BDL) from the Office québécois de la langue française, mixing information regarding grammar and syntax with general Canadian cultural heritage education. While the Canadian government generally defers grammatical questions to the Office québécois de la langue française, it is still important to note the support and visibility of inclusive language at the federal level. These resources are concerned with supporting existing linguistic policy, rather than creating new legislation or further policy, and can be considered as supplementary to the wider linguistic policy of the Office and Ministère de l'Éducation.

Being that the Linguistic Portal is primarily concerned with promoting Canadian and French-Canadian heritage, there is a blog hosted through the official government page updated by individuals working within the government on a variety of topics. Published in 2019, in the article “Respecter la non-binarité de genre en français,” Laurent Aussant once again brings the inclusive language discussion around to the neutralization of the French language and proposes several strategies for implementing neutralization in daily life and speech. Aussant offers three general methods: neutral terms (“le personnel”), formulations that include both the grammatically feminine and grammatically masculine (“les Français et les Françaises”), and neologisms, specifically the usage of the gender-neutral pronoun *iel*. Several other neo-pronouns are discussed, including *ille*, *al*, and *ol*. The first two methods are those which were first proposed by Hélène Dumais in her guide, *Pour un genre à part entière*. However, the recommendation to implement the usage of neologisms and neo-pronouns is directly in opposition to the recommendation of the Office québécois de la langue française. Although this blog entry comes with a disclaimer that the federal government blog posts in which opinions are

published do not represent the opinions of the federal government of Canada as a whole, this article was still published, hosted, and maintained on a government webpage and Aussant is currently employed as a translator with the Canadian government.

While the opinions expressed on the Linguistic Portal general blog do not represent those of the federal Canadian government, the Linguistic Portal does maintain and update several terminology databases and lexicons for public usage. The ensemble of databases is known as “Termium Plus” and hosts over fifty individual lexicons, all of which are available in French and English. Many are also available in Spanish and Portuguese. Since February 2019, a “Lexique sur la diversité sexuelle et de genre”³⁰ has been available through the federal Canadian government and the Linguistic Portal. This lexicon contains definitions in both French and English for over one hundred and ninety-three terms relating to the LGBTQ+ community. While the lexicon mentions and defines many terms related to sexuality and sexualities outside of the general “lesbian, gay, bisexual” acronym, a wide variety of gender identities is also described here. Falling under the “transgender” notion of LGBTQ+, there are many more smaller identities within the label of “non-binary” or “gender non-conforming.” Generally, nuance and gender identity are not addressed when discussing linguistic policy, both because the intricacy of gender beyond the simple recognition that there are individuals who find themselves outside of the gender binary of “man/woman” is not necessary for most linguistic discussions and the simple fact that the gender non-conforming aspect of transgender identity has not been in a highly visible position until very recently in the 21st century.

The inclusion of a wide array of nuanced definitions for different gender identities that fall under the umbrella of “non-binary” in a lexicon published by the federal government is a

³⁰ Lexicon regarding sexual diversity and gender.

positive advancement on the path for equality and visibility within the LGBTQ+ community, not only linguistically, but also in society itself. When educational resources are both made available to the public and sanctioned by governments, the range of individuals who are aware of the LGBTQ+ community only grows and in turn these individuals will be able to make informed decisions regarding their treatment of the LGBTQ+ community. More specifically, the more educational resources are available regarding *why* neutralization neologisms and innovations are needed in the French language, the more individuals will be informed regarding the topic and be able to fight for their implementation.

Discussion

When considering the first instances of the inclusive language discussion appearing in Canada in 1976 with Marie-Éva de Villers, the subsequent undertaking of both feminization and neutralization efforts within French-speaking society and in Quebec, and the increased visibility for gender non-conforming individuals thanks to the federal government, it is clear that both the federal Canadian government and the provincial Québécois government have established a politically progressive and positive precedent in governmental language doctrine. Dumais's desexualization method from the guide - *Pour un genre à part entière* - was most likely proposed with a distinctly feminist goal, that of removing societal stereotypes about women from the language. This microcosm of linguistic policy represents Canadian and Québécois language doctrine as a whole: when fighting for equal status for one marginalized group, other marginalized groups are often inadvertently included and are assisted with their own fight in the future. Today when the discussion about gender non-conforming individuals and their linguistic status is more prominent than ever before, neutralization recommendations opened the possibility

early in 1988 for neutralization to occupy a higher place in Québécois language doctrine, where it is recommended alongside feminization by a normalization body.

CHAPTER 4

NEUTRALIZATION RESOURCES FROM NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

The Problem of Neutralization

While the French government, through the office of the Prime Minister has shown itself to support feminization efforts, support is lacking for neutralization innovations. The *circulaire* of Prime Minister Edouard Philippe in 2017 regarding the implementation of neutralization innovations discouraged usage and reaffirmed that the grammatically masculine is sufficient to represent all genders (Philippe). However, the lack of government support for neutralization did not negate the desire of the francophone individuals to develop and implement linguistic innovations that would allow them to accurately refer to themselves in their language.

From the viewpoints expressed by the office of the Prime Minister and the Académie Française, it is clear that the individuals representing these institutions do not understand why neutralization innovations are necessary. While gender equality and feminization efforts are extremely important for those individuals whose gender identity aligns itself with the grammatically feminine (i.e. they identify as women), feminization ignores those individuals who identify as neither man nor woman. While there exist large amounts of literature regarding the ‘grammatically correct’ and government sanctioned ways of feminizing traditionally masculine terms (*Femme, j’écris ton nom*), feminization generally relies on traditional grammar rules that have been slightly expanded and similarly, there is no official literature mandating the ‘accepted modalities’ of feminizing. This does not mean that there are not widely used methods of feminizing that are not accepted by the government or the Académie Française, but simply that the government and Académie have not introduced official guidelines for feminization. There is no official doctrine for neutralization from a French normalization body. The official

French government position is that neutral language should not be used and that the grammatically masculine is sufficient (Philippe 2017) and the Académie Française concurs (“Déclaration de l’Académie” 2017). As discussed in the previous chapter, Canadian governmental language doctrine has included neutralization innovations since the conception of feminization and inclusive language in 1988.

This refusal to offer counsel by the French government and the Académie has resulted in a wide range of resources available for gender non-conforming individuals through non-governmental organizations. While neutralization efforts are generally supported by the Office québécois de la langue française, the Office has yet to propose a sufficient solution to the lack of a gender neutral, singular pronoun in French. These independent resources generally take the form of online and print manuals and guidelines for creating a gender-neutral environment in the French language. The range of neutralization innovations is almost as wide as the array of available resources. Briefly, the locus of neutralization innovations is the implementation of a new gender-neutral personal pronoun, *iel*, which is a neologism of the grammatically masculine and grammatically feminine personal pronouns *il* and *elle*. Other innovations include the usage of the hyphen or dash to indicate that adjectives are neither grammatically masculine nor grammatically feminine, new adjectival endings when completing grammatical gender agreement, new ways of conjugating verbs, the implementation of a gender-neutral noun in lieu of a grammatically masculine and a grammatically feminine (a large part of feminization efforts championed the creation of a grammatically feminine term). As with feminization, the purpose of this thesis is not to study the efficacy of these innovations and this thesis does not provide an examination of how these terms were developed.

Types of Independent Resources

Gender non-conforming francophone individuals have found themselves in a difficult situation. The French government and the Académie Française have refused to provide support for neutralization and options given by the Office québécois de la langue française are not sufficient. While the government-affiliated Haut Conseil à L'Égalité entre les Femmes Et Les Hommes has provided support for neutral language in their manuals, there are several gaps in the resources provided. The *Manuel d'écriture inclusive* does not provide an answer for the question of a gender neutral pronoun, nor one for the existence of only feminine or masculine adjectives in the oral. It is quite simple to add a hyphen or dash to adjectives when writing, but less simple to indicate gender neutrality when the language is spoken, as the *trait d'union* is a written convention. As Haddad and the Conseil have posited, “the French language is regulated by usage” (17). Gender non-conforming francophone individuals have begun to create their own resources, write their own dictionaries and grammar books, thus cultural language doctrine is created. These resources are not ‘official,’ but that does not mean that they are not in usage in francophone daily life. While the cultural language doctrine of the Académie Française has tended towards tradition in terms of grammatical conventions and the governmental doctrine of the French government is generally progressive regarding feminization, these grassroots resources are generally radically inclusive and radically progressive. This radical inclusivity picks up where the Office québécois leaves off, almost always recommending the usage of neutralization neologisms and neo-pronouns. With the increased availability of the Internet and usage of social media, it is quite a simple task to find resources for gender non-conforming francophone individuals. This also means that it is quite simple to publish one’s ideas and label them as a resource. The resources presented here are several examples of databases and online

resource groupings; several of the individual webpages and books offered through these databases are discussed in detail to provide a more complete analysis of independent resources.

As the majority of these resources are made by individuals, rather than organizations with a largesse of financial resources, WordPress websites, blogs, and other free-hosting platforms are common, as well as self-published books or books that are available through a free PDF download. Rather than an inventory of the innumerable compilations of independent webpages offering resources, instead I include one example of an individual blog, one example of a database provided by an organization, the Inclusive Language Guide available through McGill University, including a discussion of non-governmental research published in Quebec.

Resources Provided by Independent Websites

The first database of resources compiled for gender non-conforming francophone individuals seeking the linguistic modalities to describe themselves comes from the webpage of Gersande La Flèche (they/them), a Québécois translator and non-binary individual. La Flèche hosts a webpage where they update a blog, but additionally provide resources regarding “non-binary grammar,” which specifically takes the form of the database “Liste de ressources pour un français nonbinaire.”³¹ The guide is divided into three sections: grammar exercises and gender-neutral grammar guides, vocabulary (including glossary and lexicons of gender-neutral vocabulary), and several graphics explaining neo-pronouns, neo-determiners, and new gender neutral innovations for conjugating verbs (La Flèche). There are over twenty different resources provided, including scholarly articles, wikis, independently published books, and Wordpress webpages. In order to avoid repetition, only a few of these resources are discussed in detail.

³¹ Resources for a gender-neutral French.

Under the first category, La Flèche provides a link to the dossier entitled “Comment parler d’une personne non-binaire ?”³² from the webpage WikiTrans. Another highly recommended independent site for LGBTQ+ individuals, WikiTrans provides “all the resources for a [transgender] person who is questioning their gender or currently in transition, their close friends, and their allies” (WikiTrans). Services provided include current events reporting regarding the LGBTQ+ community around the world, primarily in francophone countries, as well as extensive articles defining what it means to be transgender, how to speak to one’s parents, how to get access to hormone replacement therapy in francophone countries, and more. While a large variety of this type of resource exists in English, this Wiki is completely in French, making it accessible to all transgender and gender non-conforming francophone individuals, French, Canadian or otherwise. As gender non-conformity is a subset of the transgender identity, WikiTrans offers numerous resources for non-binary individuals, including linguistics.

The dossier “Comment parler d’une personne non-binaire?” holds that “according to the official institutions regulating the French language, general French utilizes two grammatical genders: the masculine and the feminine. However, as the non-binary identity expresses itself on the margins and outside of this convention, it is necessary to invent new ways of speaking” (Loustoni). This article includes the progressive views of the Haut Conseil regarding the usage of neutral words and the hyphen or dash to render adjectives grammatically gender-neutral but tends towards a more radically progressive viewpoint regarding neo-pronouns and orthographical neologisms in French. Whereas the French government through *circulaires* pronounced its support for orthographical adjustments to the French language in terms of creating newly grammatically feminine terms for previously grammatically masculine terms, the options offered

³² How to speak about a non-binary person?

by the WikiTrans are those of a radical variety, inventing new ways of spelling plural adjectives without the hyphen or dash. The dossier also includes an answer to the question not provided by the Conseil; how to adjust one's grammar to properly designate a non-binary person when speaking or how to avoid using one grammatical gender for an individual who conforms to neither the feminine nor the masculine gender. WikiTrans offers several options such as repeating both the feminine and the masculine agreement, combining the agreement using an orthographical neologism, or pausing before the agreement as a way to indicate the usage of a hyphen. These new proposals represent an important distinction in cultural language doctrine, that of a popular website proposing radical adjustments to the French language.

Also, under the category of grammar exercises and gender-neutral grammar guides is the much-recommended article by non-binary and Québécois Florence Ashley (they/them), "Les personnes non-binaires en français: une perspective concernée et militante."³³ This article and specifically the research of Ashley are extremely popular recommendations in databases of resources for gender non-conforming francophone individuals and highly referenced resources for members of the LGBTQ+ community. Ashley specifies that the goal of their article is to "both defend and illustrate the usage of the grammatically neutral in French" (1). Similarly defining the need for grammatical neutrality in French, "the creation of a neutral French does not mean the creation of an obligation for non-binary individuals, but instead the creation of an option" (Ashley 1). As the French government, the Office québécois de la langue française, and the Haut Conseil propose, Ashley supports the usage of the new grammatically neutral terms, but they tend towards the radically progressive viewpoint regarding the introduction of neologisms and neo-pronouns in French. These neologisms go further in modifying French orthography than

³³ Non-binary people in French: a targeted and radical perspective.

those proposed by the Haut Conseil in the *Manuel d'écriture inclusive* or the Office québécois. Going beyond simply offering neutralization efforts, Ashley calls for a convocation of gender non-conforming francophone individuals and for the standardization of a 'neutral French.' This "convocation" would take the form of an academic conference or similar event. It is true that while there are many of these independent resources attempting to provide avenues for gender non-conforming francophone individuals, the variety of modes of neutralization and neologisms available is vast. While stratification and organization have been attempted, namely by the Haut Conseil, some elements are always missing, prompting new resources that include the elements that were missing from the organized publication. No one article or database can include every possible neutralization innovation, as they are simply too numerous. This convocation would assist in providing some form of recognizable, coherent body of resources and innovations, much like the guides and manuals published by the Conseil de l'Égalité Entre Les Femmes Et Les Hommes. Much as feminization efforts in the 1970s and the 1980s were fought for by activists and eventually recognized by the French government, neutralization activists are currently experiencing much of the same phenomenon. Revolutions and wide acceptance of linguistic changes do not happen overnight. However, when the progression of the opinions offered by the French government and the Académie Française is studied, a clear evolution towards the acceptance of cultural language doctrine is evident. The convocation proposed by Ashley represents the desire by the non-binary francophone community to see neutralization efforts and innovations widely recognized and hopefully one day, accepted.

Inclusive Language Guide – McGill University

While many inclusive language resource lists and guides in French are independently published, an extensive online guide is available through the library of McGill University, public

research institution in Montreal. There are over one hundred individual library guides available in French and English, organized into chapters including links, tables, and figures relevant to the subject matter. The “Guide de recherche en écriture inclusive”³⁴ is compiled and moderated by Michael David Miller, an associate librarian specializing in francophone literature, LGBTQ+ issues, and economics. As described, this database serves as “a guide grouping scientific, governmental, and popular resources regarding inclusive writing at the government level” (Miller). Divided into five chapters and an introduction, this guide furnishes inclusive language resources in these domains: media and research, guides and manuals for inclusive writing, information regarding the hyphen or dash and other similar innovations, neutral pronouns, and instructions for finding other resources for inclusive language. Similar to the resources provided by La Flèche, Miller covers a wide range of documents, governmental and independent alike. The guides of le Haut Conseil à l’Égalité entre les Femmes Et Les Hommes are referenced, although no chronology or evolution of actions taken by either of these bodies is presented. Commonly referenced documents include current French and Canadian news publications about the usage of inclusive language and manuals regarding its usage. Miller also offers the usage of the software “IncluZor.e” which automatically rewrites any text written in French to include inclusive language innovations, feminization and neutralization alike. While Miller’s guide is formulated for all innovations encompassed in ‘inclusive language,’ it does present a large number of radical neutralization innovations including information on new verb conjugation endings and the neologisms also proposed by WikiTrans. Although this guide was created with McGill University students conducting research in mind and contains many resources for conducting it, the guide nonetheless represents the important step in cultural language doctrine of

³⁴ Guide for research in Inclusive Language.

a highly visible bilingual university recognizing that inclusive language both occupies a legitimate field of study and includes both feminization and neutralization efforts.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The question of inclusivity in the French language remains one that is highly debated today. Attempts to add lessons regarding the usage of feminized terms to French schoolbooks have been swiftly rebuked, as well as efforts to add a special key to the French keyboard that would allow users to type the *point médian* with ease. The Académie Française has behaved in such a manner that has significantly set back the status of feminization since the 1980s, claiming to be sensitive to linguistic evolutions and simultaneously rejecting efforts made by the Office of the French Prime Minister to implement any reforms. When compared to the advancements made in Quebec before the French government had even officially taken up the question in 1984, France appears to be significantly behind regarding the acceptance of feminization as a linguistic evolution that will not disappear overnight.

However, it is thanks to the Académie Française that French women had to wait so many years for the proper, feminized terminology to be officially recognized. Similarly, it is here that the Office of the French Prime Minister merits a level of praise. It was through the publication of *circulaires* that the French government continued its support of feminization. These *circulaires* remained largely symbolic and applied only to representatives of the French government. However, the attempt and motivation behind the continued support over the span of thirty years is clear. While Hélène Dumais clearly demonstrated the capability of the French language to function in a grammatically gender-neutral manner in her guide *Pour un genre à part entière* in the 1970s, the Académie Française would continue to insist that the grammatically masculine serves as a gender-neutral form (“La Féminisation” 2014). Additionally, it was Marie-Éva de Villers who would offer the decision to the Office québécois de la langue française that the usage

of the grammatically feminine article when applied to women is grammatically correct, while the Académie Française has only as recently as 2019 accepted the usage of certain feminized terms. It was these swift rebukes of the Académie that prevented the linguistic evolution of the French language to include feminized terms. If the propositions published in the 1986 *circulaire* had been accepted or considered, it is possible the thirty years of declarations against feminization could have been avoided.

Regardless of the actions of the Académie Française from the 1980s to the 2010s, feminized terms have by and large become an accepted part of the French lexicon. Neutralization efforts, however, are still fighting to become part of the collective linguistic unconscious. While some innovations such as opting for a neutral construction that makes no reference to gender identity rather than a *doublet* have taken hold, it does not seem that there will be widespread usage of neo-pronouns and neologisms developed under neutralization anytime soon. Additionally, neutralization is often separated from feminization and given a place of “lesser importance.” Fledgling neutralization efforts would not exist without the work done by proponents of feminization in the 1980s in the French government and neutralization efforts should not be separated from feminization. Inclusive language must comprise efforts to make the French language a place for women and gender non-conforming individuals alike.

It is clear that resistance to feminization lies primarily in sexism and refusal to allow women to claim linguistic equality, while resistance to neutralization lies in homophobia and transphobia. The resources presented in this thesis are Internet resources for nonbinary francophone individuals; there exists no ‘official’ grammatical protection for these individuals and neutralization innovations are often dismissed as “not important” or simply “too difficult.” This is the position of the Académie Française as stated in its 2017 declaration referring to

neutralization as placing the French language in “mortal peril” (“Déclaration de l’Académie Française sur l’Écriture dite ‘inclusive’” 2017). Furthermore, the Académie claimed that implementing neutralization efforts would cause confusion for learners of the French language and destroy the purity of the French language. It is difficult to read such blatant transphobia and homophobia, diffused by a public institution that wields a significant linguistic power.

Individuals fighting for the recognition of neutralization terms are not seeking to change the fabric of the French language or francophone culture, simply to find their place within it. While the existence of homophobia, transphobia, and sexism is not always overt in these refusals, they are made clear by the rhetoric and behavior of those expressing these ideas, such as the altering of the French language to provide gender-neutral options presenting a hurdle to the language’s “linguistic purity” (“Déclaration de l’Académie” 2014).

The implementation and diffusion of inclusive language starts on the individual level. Every French speaker must make the conscious decision to utilize inclusive terms, feminization and neutralization alike. This is not a simple task. Native French speakers have often not been instructed to utilize inclusive terms in their everyday speech and these terms are not often taught in beginning language courses. Many individuals do not realize that they are employing grammatical constructions that favor the masculine grammatical gender when it is quite a simple task to add the grammatically feminine in cases such as the *doublet*. In these cases, it is simply overlooked or not considered to be important. Efforts to implement some form of inclusive language instruction in beginning and intermediate language classes are often dismissed as “too much for students” and “too difficult to explain.” As with all societal evolutions, it will take time, effort, and a considerable amount of education, for both native speakers of French and students of French alike.

For university students of French, this is a rarely discussed and often dismissed topic, leaving women and nonbinary students feeling left behind. I was inspired to undertake this thesis and elaborate on the situation regarding both feminization and neutralization after being told on several occasions that neutralization efforts were “ruining the French language” and as an instructor, that it was simply too hard to speak to beginning students about grammatical gender and gender neutrality in French. After completing this study I have come to the conclusion that these are excuses, propped up on homophobia, transphobia, and lack of understanding. There is no excuse and no reason to not bring up these issues in a sensitive way in a classroom setting. It is true that it will take time and effort on the part of both instructors and students to fully understand these issues and be able to speak accurately about them. The goal is not to offer an in-depth lesson to beginning students of French on how to add the *point médian* to constructions or even how to form neologisms. The goal is to open the world of the French language to all who wish to enter it, without the caveat of sexism or homophobia. As is clearly demonstrated in the chronology of governmental and independent actions presented here, this is not a goal that can be easily achieved with one publication or even within several months; it is the work of generations and of years.

APPENDIX A
GLOSSARY OF RELEVANT TERMS

- **Doublet:** A feminization technique, involving the inclusion of both the grammatically masculine and the grammatically feminine instead of simply the grammatically masculine.

Ex. *Les Françaises et les Français* instead of *les Français*, *les enseignantes et les enseignants* instead of *les enseignants*.

- **Feminization / féminisation:** All innovations, modalities, and formulations developed for the purpose of making the French language more accessible to women. Feminization most often encompasses the implementation of feminized names of jobs, titles, and ranks and the usage of grammatically feminine terms alongside grammatically masculine terms.

- **Gender-neutral:** Refers to adjectives and formulations that do not indicate the gender of the subject within the man/woman gender binary.

- **Grammatical gender:** Refers to the grammatical conception of ‘gender,’ in which nouns and adjectives have an assigned ‘gender,’ either grammatically masculine or grammatically feminine. When discussing impersonal nouns (ex. the cat, a bottle), grammatical gender does not make references to the gender identity of the subject. When discussing individuals, the grammatical gender of adjectives must agree in gender and number with the subject, making references to the gender identity of the subject. There are two options for grammatical gender in the French language: masculine and feminine.

- **Inclusive language doctrine:** In the context of this thesis, all innovations, modalities, and formulations developed for the purpose of making the French language more accessible to both women and gender-nonconforming individuals. The term *écriture inclusive* (literally “inclusive language”) is often found in French sources and refers only to innovations, modalities, and formulations developed for the feminization of the French language.

- **Neologism:** A newly developed expression or phrase, in terms of inclusive language doctrine, terms developed to offer a gender-neutral form of a previously gendered noun.

Ex. *Frère* and *sœur* are the French words for “brother” and “sister.” A proposed neologism is *frøeur* as there is no term for “sibling” in French.

- **Neo-pronoun:** A newly developed pronoun, usually gender-neutral, to be implemented alongside the grammatically masculine and grammatically feminine personal pronouns. In French, the singular personal pronouns are *il* and *elle*, “he” and “she,” respectively. Singular personal neo-pronouns in French include *iel*, *eil*, and *ieil*. These have been offered as alternatives to *il* and *elle*.

- **Neutralization / *neutralisation*:** All innovations, modalities, and formulations developed for the purpose of making the French language more accessible to those who identify as neither man nor woman. Neutralization most often encompasses the development of gender-neutral pronouns, gender-neutral neologisms to replace previously gendered nouns, and methods of speaking about nonbinary individuals without referencing grammatical gender.

- **Nonbinary:** Anything existing outside of the man/woman gender binary.

- ***Point médian*:** A hyphen or dot placed in between noun and adjectival endings indicating that both the grammatically masculine and grammatically feminine are included in the subject.

Ex. *Un·e directeur·trice, les étudiants·es.*

- ***Trait d’union*:** A dash, used similarly to the hyphen.

Ex. *Un-e directeur-trice, les étudiants-es.*

APPENDIX B

CHRONOLOGY OF RELEVANT ACTIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

- **1961:** Creation of the Office québécois de la langue française by Quebecois Prime Minister, Jean Lesage.
- **1976:** Eight women are elected to public office in Quebec, Marie-Éva de Villers is tasked with adapting titles and functions to refer to these women in the government by Quebecois Prime Minister, René Levesque.
- **1979:** De Villers makes her official recommendation to the Assemblée Nationale de Québec, affirming the usage of feminized titles and functions.
- **July, 1979:** De Villers's recommendation is published in the *Gazette Officielle du Québec*.
- **1984:** Creation of la Commission générale de terminologie et de néologie by French Minister of Women's Rights, Yvette Roudy.
- **June, 1984:** Publication of the declaration "Féminisation des noms de métiers et de fonctions" by Georges Dumézil and Claude Lévi-Strauss of the Académie Française.
- **March, 1986:** Publication of the "Circulaire du 11 mars 1986 relative à la féminisation des noms de métier, fonction, grade ou titre" by French Prime Minister, Laurent Fabius.
- **1988:** Publication of the guide *Pour un genre à part entière : guide pour la rédaction de textes non-sexistes* by Hélène Dumais, under the Quebecois Minister of Education.
- **March, 1998:** Publication of the "Circulaire du 6 mars 1998 relative à la féminisation des noms de métier, fonction, grade ou titre" by French Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin.
- **1999:** Publication of the guide *Femme j'écris ton nom... Guide d'aide à la féminisation des noms de métiers, titres, grades et fonctions* by the French Office of the Prime Minister
- **February, 2012:** Publication of the "Circulaire no 5575/SG du 21 février 2012 relative à la suppression des termes 'Mademoiselle', 'nom de jeune fille', 'nom patronymique', 'nom d'épouse' et 'nom d'époux' des formulaires et correspondances des administrations" by French Prime Minister, François Fillon.
- **2013:** Creation of the Haut Conseil à L'Égalité Entre Les Femmes Et Les Hommes by French president, François Hollande.
- **2015:** Publication of the declaration "La féminisation" by the Académie Française, recognizing the usage of feminization modalities.
- **2016:** Publication of the *Guide pratique pour une communication publique sans stéréotype de sexe* by the Haut Conseil.
- **October, 2017:** Publication of the declaration "Déclaration de l'Académie Française sur l'Écriture dite 'inclusive' " by the Académie Française, decrying the usage of neutralization modalities.

- **November, 2017:** Publication of the “Circulaire du 21 novembre 2017 relative aux règles de féminisation et de rédaction des textes publiés au Journal officiel de la République française” by French Prime Minister, Edouard Philippe, affirming support for feminization and decrying neutralization modalities.
- **2017:** Publication of the *Manuel d’écriture inclusive* by the Haut Conseil.
- **2017:** Revised Publication of the *Manuel d’écriture inclusive* by the Haut Conseil.
- **2019:** Publication of the declaration "La féminisation" by the Académie Française, formally adopting several feminization modalities.
- **2019:** Revised Publication of the *Manuel d’écriture inclusive* by the Haut Conseil.
- **2020-present:** Updating and maintaining of the Banque de dépannage linguistique by the Office Québécois de la langue française.

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