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Quebec's Language Policies in the Neoliberal Age

Jacques MAURAIS

Former Research Coordinator
Office Québécois de la Langue Française (Quebec City)
jamaurais@oricom.ca

Abstract. The purpose of this paper is to analyse recent trends in Quebec's language policies. The paper focuses on the following topics: the language of commercial signs, including the language of corporate (or firm) names; the language used to attend customers; the choice of the language of instruction; and the "quality of language" (that is, quality of the French language) issue.

Keywords: Charter of the French Language, French in Quebec, trade-marked business names, language used in serving customers, choice of the language of instruction, endo-normative standard

Introduction

Since 1969, the National Assembly of Quebec has passed a dozen laws in language matters. The most significant is the Charter of the French Language passed in 1977 and still in force though over the years some of its provisions have been overruled by the Supreme Court of Canada while others have been amended by Quebec National Assembly itself (for an historical overview, see Office québécois de la langue française, hereafter OQLF, 2012a).

The factors which are at the root of Quebec's language policies began to emerge more clearly in the 1960's (see Maurais 1985 and 1989):

- the economic inferiority of French-speaking Canadians, a finding made by the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism set up by the federal government in the 1960's and by a commission of enquiry set up by the Quebec government in 1969 (the Gendron Commission); but Tocqueville had already noted the differences in status between French and English speakers in Lower Canada when he made his famous trip through North America in 1831-32 (excerpts of his diary published by Bouthillier and Meynaud, 1972: 139-147;
- the preponderance of English on the labor market in Quebec, this being evidenced by the fact that English was dominant in the workplace and on commercial signage; especially in downtown Montreal there were shop attendants unable to provide services in French: this perception was so widespread that in 1989 a federalist provincial minister, Pierre MacDonald, still spoke of "the bloody fat English women at Eaton's who could not speak French" (Radio-Canada, 1989);
- the apprehensions of French speakers in Quebec regarding their demographic future: immigrants were more and more being assimilated into the English-speaking minority; this language shift was facilitated by the fact that every citizen could choose between French and English as the language of instruction for their children. Even French-speaking parents increasingly chose to enroll their youngsters in English schools (up to 25,000 French-speaking children in 1973 according to Duchesne, 1973).
- "language quality" has been a recurrent topic in Quebec's language debate since the early 19th century (see Gendron, 2007) and when the first language planning agency, the Office de la langue française (French Language Bureau), was created in 1961 it was assigned the task to correct and enrich the spoken and written language (9-10 Eliz. II, c. 23).

Among the aforementioned themes the economic inferiority of native French-speakers is no longer a topical issue. Research has shown that major changes have occurred and that there is no longer a wage gap between native English-speakers and native French-speakers in Quebec. In contradistinction with 1970, in 2000 there was no difference between the mean salary of native English-speaking male workers and native French-speaking male workers (women were excluded from the study on the ground that their presence and behavior on the labour market were not comparable in 1970 and 2000); whereas the mean salary of bilinguals had increased in comparison with 1970 (Béland et al., 2008). Admittedly this change is better explained by the rising education level of French-speakers than by the effects of language laws which are more difficult to ascertain.

The results on the disappearing wage gap between native French and English speakers come from a longitudinal survey by Béland *et al*. conducted using census

microdata provided by Statistics Canada. However it is doubtful whether such a comparable survey could be done in the future owing to substantial changes made by the federal Conservative government to the 2011 census. Canada's chief statistician, Munir Sheikh, resigned in 2010 over the issue "of whether a voluntary survey can become a substitute for a mandatory census" (Chase and Grant, 2010). This is one example of how neoliberal ideology impacts research. To put this in perspective it could be added that the federal Conservative Minister for science and technology Gary Goodyear, a man at the centre of a controversy over federal funding cuts to researchers, is an avowed creationist.

The remaining themes mentioned in this introduction will be treated in the following order: the language of commercial signs, including the language of corporate (or firm) names; the language used to attend customers; the choice of the language of instruction; and the "quality of language" (that is, quality of the French language) issue, i.e. what Kloss (1969) proposed to call corpus planning. As will become evident, these themes are still the focus of the language debate in Quebec.

The Language of Commercial Signs

The language of commercial signs, or more exactly the place of French on commercial signs, is an issue that has been rampant since at least the 1960's. From 1977 when Bill 101 was passed till 1993, French was the only language to be used on commercial signs (there were exceptions for signs advertizing cultural activities, for ethnic shops, for political or religious messages, etc., see Maurais 1989: 146). This French-only policy was deemed necessary because it was to symbolize, in the eyes of all, that linguistic change was under way and that French was regaining ground. These provisions were challenged before the courts and in 1993 Québec's National Assembly passed a new law allowing for bilingual (or multilingual) commercial signs provided that French was given a marked predominance. This concept of a marked predominance of French was suggested and approved of by the Supreme Court of Canada in its 1988 ruling though it did not define it. Neither did the law passed in 1993, which simply states that "Public signs and posters and commercial advertising must be in French. They may also be both in French and in another language provided that French is markedly predominant [...]" (section 58 of R.S.Q., chapter C-11; 1993, c. 40, s. 18). In practice French is deemed markedly predominant when messages in French are twice as numerous or written in characters twice as large as in any other language (OQLF, 2012: 48).

The issue of English increasing its presence on commercial signs in the Montreal area has come periodically to the forefront. French lobbies have been active in filing complaints with the OQLF. In 2009-10, 39.1 % of the complaints filed at the OQLF dealt with the language of commercial signs, up from 26.4 % in 2008-09 (OQLF, 2010: 70) and 10.5% in 2006-2007 (OQLF, 2007: XIII).

A series of reports on the language of commercial signs in Montreal made public by the OQLF on June 1, 2012 went almost unnoticed, since it was released in the wake of massive student protests and social unrest. It should not come as a surprise that these reports were published at a time when they would pass almost unnoticed. For indeed their findings tend to confirm the apprehensions of those complaining that English is coming back in force in the Montreal area (see testimonies posted on French language advocacy sites such as vigile.net and imperatif-francais.org).

According to this 2012 report, in 1997 and 2010 French was present on respectively 96% and 94% of business names and signs; this means a slight decrease of the presence of French on commercial signs in the whole Montreal area from 1997 to 2010 and it is statistically significant (OQLF, 2012b: 39). In 2010 some 82% of signs posted on shops and businesses were in French only, some 3% were bilingual but with a marked predominance given to French. The OQLF report acknowledges that French is indeed predominant in the linguistic landscape of Montreal; and in some areas it is even the only language used on commercial signs (OQLF, 2012b: 41). However in the West Island area 11% of commercial signs have no French wording (OQLF, 2012b: 44).

The OQLF report also concludes that English is "stable" on commercial signs though its presence went down from 43% in 1997 to 41% in 2010 (OQLF, 2012b: 9-10). The statement that the presence of English is stable is dubious and even misleading considering that from 43% in 1997 it went up to 49% in 1999 and then down to 41% in 2010. The figures rather show that English is far from being stable and suggest that it might indeed be retreating. These figures are not concealed but the report prefers to play down this potential decrease of English on commercial signs. Such a behavior is puzzling and one may wonder why the OQLF prefers not to highlight this relative decrease in the presence of English in a context where this agency is frequently reproached to be weak in its defense of French. The explanation for this behavior might be that it is not socially and politically acceptable to suggest that English might be less present on commercial signage. Especially at a time when the linguistic insecurity of French-speaking Montrealers runs high and when other reports published simultaneously attest to a decrease in the use of French (see below the section on the use of French in attending customers in shops and retail stores). Moreover it should be reminded that the report was published in a pre-electoral climate (elections were called a few weeks later on 1 August 2012) and that English speakers and more generally people who do not have French as their native language constitute the hard core of the Quebec Liberal Party electorate (so much so that political opinion poll data are regularly disaggregated between native speakers of French and native speakers of all other languages). It should therefore not come as a surprise that the then Liberal

government (nor the sovereignist Official Opposition) would choose to play down this relative decrease in the use of English.

The 2010 survey was updated in 2012 but only for a section of downtown Montreal (St.-Catherine Street between Papineau and Atwater). The scope of this new survey was restricted to business. The OQLF found that 81.7% of businesses complied with the requirements of Bill 101 while 18.3% did not (OQLF, 2012c: 25). But according to a survey made the same year by Radio-Canada in the same section of downtown Montreal and with the same target, more than 25% of business names did not comply with Bill 101 (Faits et Causes, 2012). It is reasonable to assume that the figures given by the OQLF survey are more accurate owing to the agency legal expertise, whereas the Radio-Canada findings would be more consistent with popular feeling.

The issue of English-only business names and more specifically of English-only trademarks used as business names has been at the forefront of linguistic tensions in Montreal since the 1990's. In 2000 the Conseil (since 2002 Conseil *supérieur*) de la langue française (hereafter Conseil or CSLF) published a notice on this issue. The Conseil noted that though the law states that business names must be in French, accompanying regulations grant an exemption for trademarked names in languages other than French. The Conseil adressed the frequent practice of businesses using trademarked English names in their storefront signage. It noted that owing to international agreements it is not feasible to require that businesses add a modifier in French to their trademarked English names.

Nevertheless, in November 2011 and again in January 2012 the OQLF launched a promotional campaign asking stores with trademarked English names to add generic or descriptive French terms to their signs or add a slogan in French. The OQLF added that it would crack down on businesses using trademarked English names and began mailing warnings to dozens of retailers. Even in government upper circles some thought that the government agency misinterpreted the law (as reported by Lessard, 2012).

It should be added that a peak in Neoliberal language policies was reached in 2011 when the OQLF offered up to $50,000 to help the Francization of small businesses that did not comply with the questionable interpretation the agency gives of the regulations on trade-marked business names (OQLF, 2011).

The legal basis for the OQLF move is indeed shaky and one can only speculate on its underlying motives. As the Conseil notice explains, trade-marks are protected by international legal agreements. And it would be difficult to call into question a world-wide legal process, which began more than one hundred years ago. However, the Conseil added, if Quebec cannot act unilaterally, it can express its concerns in international forums. Topics such as English trade-marked names and more generally the language of commercial signs should be discussed at

the international level. Owing to globalization, products trade-marked in English can indeed be found everywhere (CLF, 2000: chapter 3, section 2).

Language Used in Serving Customers in Shops and Retail Stores

In the decades leading up to the adoption of a comprehensive language legislation complaints were frequently voiced about shop attendants being unable to provide services in French in Montreal. The 1977 Charter of the French Language (section 5) therefore states that "consumers of goods and services have a right to be informed and served in French". But complaints continued to be voiced and in 1988 the then Conseil de la langue française (later renamed Conseil supérieur de la langue française) decided to carry on a survey in downtown Montreal. This survey was done by active observers sent in pairs to visit shops, retail stores and shopping malls in selected areas on Montreal Island. The survey covered two subjects: the language in which customers were greeted and the possibility to get services in French. As for greeting, customers were greeted in French in 60% cases in western down-town and 50% in the West island area. In shopping malls and department stores the rate of greeting in French went from 80% in downtown Montreal to 50% in the West island area. As for the impossibility to get services in French, the rate went from 7% in western downtown to 13% in the West island area; in shopping malls and department stores, it was 4% (Monnier 1989).

This survey was replicated in 1995. According to the observation areas the new survey found that the use of French had variously increased, was stable or had decreased. Overall, the impossibility to get services in French was estimated at 5% to 10% according to the areas whereas in shopping malls and department stores it went from 0 to 3%. The report concludes that the overall evolution from the 1960's is favourable to French but that short term trends (from 1988 to 1995) are ambiguous (Monnier, 1996).

The survey was again replicated in 2010. The results show a major increase in the use of French in greeting customers in two areas, downtown St.-Laurent Boulevard (from 72% in 1988 up to 86% in 1995 and 96% in 2010) and western downtown (from 59% up to 71% in shops and retail stores, from 76% to 87% in shopping malls). However the results also show an important decrease in the use of French in the Côte-des-Neiges and Snowdon neighborhoods (from 60% down to 44%). As for the possibility to get services in French, it increased in downtown St.-Laurent Boulevard (from 91% in 1988 up to 99% in 2010), was stable in western downtown (ca.95-97%) but went down from 97% in 1988 to 91% in 2010 in Côte-des-Neiges and Snowdon shopping malls (OQLF, 2012d: esp. 64-66).

A smaller-scale survey was done in 2012. Its scope was restricted to downtown St.-Catherine Street (between Papineau and Atwater). Results show a significant decrease over a two-year period in the use of French as the only

language to greet customers in shops and retail stores, from 89% in 2010 down to 73% in 2012. Curiously enough, this finding is not mentioned in the summary published by the OQLF (OQLF, 2012e: 5 where the figure given is 74% for 2012 and the 2010 figure is omitted). There is a corresponding increase in the use of bilingual greetings from 1% in 2010 up to 14% 2012. However there was no difference in the impossibility to get services in French over this two-year period (OQLF, 2012f: 16 and 22). These findings lend weight to the popular perception that the overall use of French in Montreal is indeed decreasing.

Language of Instruction

The Charter of the French Language restricts access to English-language public schools to children "whose father or mother is a Canadian citizen and received elementary instruction in English in Canada, provided that that instruction constitutes the major part of the elementary instruction he or she received in Canada" (section 73.1) This means that native French-speakers do not have the freedom to choose the language in which their children will receive their instruction. And immigrants (even English mother tongue immigrants) must enroll their children in French schools.

At higher education levels the language of instruction is not regulated and freedom of choice prevails.

The system of higher education in Quebec differs from what exists in the other Canadian provinces and territories. Pupils in Quebec leave secondary school after grade 11 and do not enter university directly but go to general and vocational colleges called CEGEPs (junior colleges). There are French junior colleges and English junior colleges; in remote areas, some French junior colleges have an English section. In principle English junior colleges accommodate the local English population.

The vast majority of native French speakers having studied in French secondary schools enroll in French junior colleges (some 96% in 2010). The same holds even more so for the English-speaking pupils: in 2010, 98% of pupils graduating from English high schools were enrolled in English junior colleges. 32% of Allophones (students having neither French nor English as their mother tongue) having studied in French high schools switched to an English junior college whereas 99.6% of Allophones having studied in English high schools remained in the English sector. In other words, 47% of all Allophones leaving high school went to an English junior college (MELS 2012). These figures show that the attraction of English is still powerful.

Proposals have been made in recent years to regulate the access to English junior colleges and in particular to make sure that the rule governing the access to English primary and secondary education also applies to junior colleges.

Proponents of this strengthening of Bill 101 argue that students graduating from English junior colleges are much less prone to use French on the labor market. In particular Allophones students graduating from English junior colleges have less friends among French speakers than Allophones graduating from French junior colleges; and students at English junior colleges, whatever their mother tongue, watch French television much less than English television (IRFA, 2010). English junior colleges have therefore a strong anglicizing power (see the discussion of the IRFA data by Lisée, 2010 and Castonguay, 2011).

Freedom in the choice of the language of instruction at the junior college level has been endorsed by the Conseil Supérieur de la Langue Française (CSLF), a government advisory body (CSLF, 2011). The CSLF report gave support to the liberal government's position not to amend Bill 101 in this regard while the Parti Québécois official opposition has in its program to extend to junior colleges the rule governing access to primary and secondary education in English.

However statistics on which the Conseil recommendation was made have since been called into question. In 2012, the Conseil had to admit in a communiqué that its recommendation was based on dubious statistics provided by the Department of Education; in particular the proportion of Allophones attending French junior colleges was not 64.2% but 51.5%, a substantial over-estimation (CSLF, 2012).

Freedom in the choice of the language of instruction is a topic illustrative of Neoliberal trends at work, especially merchandizing education. Typical of Neoliberal educational politicies is the statement made by the Université de Montréal's rector that "the brains of students must meet corporative needs" (quoted by Gagnon, 2012). Freedom of choice needs to be discussed in the context of a 75% increase in tuition fees over 5 years proposed in 2012 by Quebec's Liberal Party government (later changed to a 82% increase over a 7-year period, cf. Fillion, 2012). This proposal led to a major social crisis in 2012 (called '*le printemps érable*', maple spring, a pun on '*printemps arabe*', Arab spring). It should be added that all major political parties favor to various degrees an increase in tuition fees (only fringe political parties support free higher education). It is doubtful that freedom of choice can be ignored if tuition fees at junior colleges rise from $2,168 to $3,947 over a seven-year period (Fillion, 2012).

This is because Quebec has become a society where the state provides services to customers rather than to citizens, where patients are considered as customers of health services, where citizens are seen more and more as user-payers, where students are asked to pay their "fair share" of tuition fees, where it has become almost commonplace to speak of the electorate as '*clientèle électorale*', as voter-customers. The law of the market dictates that customers are always right. In a context of client-centered government policies, one wonders why the student-customers should not be able to choose the language in which they

receive the educational services provided by and bought from the state. This was the argument put forward by the lawyer defending two students who had been prevented from attending their classes during the 2012 student protest movement. This lawyer pleaded that his clients "have a contract with their educational institution and they have the right to receive the services provided for in the contract" (quoted by Herdhuin, 2012).

The merchandization of education can be illustrated by another example. Thanks to a legal loophole it had become possible in the late 1990's to buy access to the English schools system through "bridging schools": after only one year of study in a non state-subsidized English bridging school a pupil could acquire the right to enroll in the public English schools system. The pupil's brothers and sisters simultaneously acquired this right. A law was passed in 2002 to fill in this breach but it was over-ruled in 2007 by the Appeal Court of Quebec and in 2009 by the Supreme Court of Canada. In 2010, Quebec's National Assembly passed a new law: after three years of study in a non state-subsidized English bridging school a pupil could acquire the right to enroll in the public English schools system.

The "Quality of Language" Issue (Corpus Planning)

The Charter of the French Language stipulates that French is the official language of Quebec (section 1). But it says nothing about which variety of French should form the basis of its norm. It has been commonly assumed that it was the variety described in the most commonly used dictionaries and grammars (Jean-Claude Corbeil, personal communication). At the time the Official Language Law (1972) and the Charter of the French Language (1977) were passed, this meant essentially dictionaries and grammars made by Europeans and published in Europe (Commission des états généraux, 2001: 81). In litigious cases where there was no consensus on which term was to be used in French or when there was no agreement on what the proper translation was for an English term or phrase, Quebec's language agency, the Régie de la langue française (the name of the language agency from 1972 to 1977), explained in 1976 (Régie, 1976: 9) that it was empowered by the law to officialize a French equivalent and make its use compulsory in certain circumstances (in state documents, in public advertizing, in textbooks, etc.).

Nevertheless allowing French to become Quebec's official, common, and working language has meant an increased preoccupation with social and regional variation. A debate developed on which kind of French should be the official one: was it to be the international standard historically based on Parisian French but increasingly tolerant of local peculiarities (as evidenced by the introduction of many 'Belgicisms', 'Quebecisms', 'Africanisms', etc., in the major dictionaries published in Paris)? Or was Quebec to establish its own standard variety placed at

the pinnacle of a series of hierarchized colloquial registers (as proposed by the Conseil de la langue française, 1990: 30 and 50 and in various papers by Cajolet-Laganière and Martel, e.g. 1996)?

For those adhering to the second proposal, Quebec French is considered as an autonomous language variety possessing its own standard, a standard that is said to reflect the linguistic uses of the new French-speaking middle class, which arose after World War II (Gendron, 1986). As linguist Jean-Denis Gendron (1986: 95) adds, this new predominant linguistic standard appears in public and official discourses, both spoken and written. In 1990, the Conseil de la langue française proposed to launch a comprehensive description of Quebec French uses (at times abbreviated as... FUQ 'français en usage au Québec'), including standard uses. This led to the creation of the Franqus project based at the Université de Sherbrooke; the project has received substantial funding from the state (more than $3 M as of 2005, cf. Meney, 2005).

Others propose to view the linguistic situation of Quebec as diglossical (e.g. Lamonde, 1998: 96-103; Barbaud, 1998; Meney, 2010). Typically, diglossia means a situation where two language varieties are in contact, each of them having certain spheres of social interaction assigned to it. The relationship between the two language varieties is hierarchical: one has high, the other has low prestige. According to this view, the high variety in Quebec would be 'international French', used for example in official, commercial, and scientific communications, while the low variety would be Quebec colloquial French used mainly but not exclusively in non formal circumstances (see the discussion by Meney, 2010: 102-122, esp. p. 106).

There is therefore a two-fold division on the topic of which linguistic norm should be favored: on the one hand, those who hold that international standard French should be the variety taught in schools; on the other hand, 'endogenists' who propose that Quebec should officialize its own linguistic norm. 'Endogenists' have maintained for years that there is a consensus among Quebec linguists and the general public on an endo-normative standard (e.g. Commission des états généraux, 2001: 84 and Conseil de la langue française, 1990).

A proposal was sent to the 2008 sovereignist Parti québécois convention asking that 'the teaching of French should be reoriented toward the acquisition of spoken and written standard Quebec French' (quoted by Paquot, 2009). Linguist Annette Paquot intervened in the media before the proposal was discussed at the convention (Paquot, 2008). She pointed out that the proposed new standard differs only marginally from the established international norm (mainly easily understandable lexical items) and that even supporters of this new standard write their books and publish their papers in international standard French (Paquot, 2008 and 2009). The Parti Québécois convention finally made no move since promoting a new language standard in schools was clearly not supported by public opinion (this is of course reminiscent of the 'Oakland Ebonics controversy' in the USA).

The rejection of the proposal on standard Quebec French by the 2008 Parti Québécois convention shows that there is obviously no consensus on the adoption of an endo-normative standard in the public at large. Moreover many prominent linguists (e.g. Barbaud, Meney, Nemni, Paquot) disagree on the existence of the consensus peremptorily proclaimed in some official reports. Admittedly the opponents just mentioned are foreign-born but many native Quebecers also discourage the establishment of a local norm (for instance opinion leaders Lysiane Gagnon at the daily *La Presse* and Denise Bombardier at *Le Devoir*). Also, this raises the issue of the discrimination that a new standard could bring to immigrant citizens, a great number of whom are selected by the Department of Immigration on the criterion that they already have a working knowledge of French – a knowledge usually acquired abroad at school where the only variety of French taught is 'international French'. This argument was developped by Maurais (2008b) who advised choosing the standard that would create the least discrimination.

The absence of a consensus on a new local linguistic norm is also evidenced by the results of opinion polls: in surveys done in 1998 and 2004 about half the respondents felt that they spoke Québécois while the other half felt that they spoke French (Maurais, 2008a: 19).

On the basis of the opinion poll results published by Maurais (2008a), it has been argued by Paquot (2009) and by Meney (2010) that if there is at all a consensus on the linguistic variety to be taught in Quebec's schools, it does not tend to support the claim made by the proponents of an autonomous norm. Quite the reverse: 76.8% of respondents (all native French-speakers born in Quebec) think that international French should be the standard variety taught in schools while 88.3% think that it is advisable that reference books used in schools (such as grammars and dictionaries) should be the same in all French-speaking countries.

Despite the above, the OQLF's *Grand Dictionnaire Terminologique* (Grand Terminological Dictionary, hereafter GDT) has maintained its new orientation adopted in the early 2000's, which favors the acceptance of colloquial words (including loan-words and loan-translations). The GDT merely tags them with the label "langue courante", but this is not done systematically. This approach, in its core more lexicographical than terminological, was denounced in a manifesto by 19 former OQLF's terminologists. These terminologists were supported by more than a hundred other terminologists, translators and copy-editors (Manifesto, 2011; for a critical assessment of the GDT, see Meney, 2011: 405-443).

All in all, the debate over which variety of French should prevail still goes on but supporters of 'international French' have made headway and the former chairperson of the Conseil supérieur de la langue française Conrad Ouellon declared his preference for international French (CSLF, 2010: 2).

Conclusion

This paper has reviewed recent data on the situation of French in Quebec from the turn of the century. Worrisome reports have recently documented the fragile situation of French in Montreal, lending weight to the popular perception that the overall use of French has been indeed decreasing over the last decade.

The language of commercial signs has been a sensitive issue for many decades. Recent surveys show that there has been a slight decrease of the presence of French on commercial signs in the whole Montreal area from 1997 to 2010. The issue of English-only business names and more specifically of English-only trademarks used as business names remains at the forefront of linguistic tensions in Montreal.

Surveys have also been done on the langue used in greeting and serving customers in Montreal. Compared with previous surveys, recent data show quite opposite trends according to the area: in some neighborhoods the use of French in greeting and serving customers has increased while in others it has significantly decreased. On average, it should be noted that French-speakers can be served in their language in nine out of ten cases.

As for the language of instruction, the most sensitive issue is currently whether access to English junior colleges should be available only to those pupils who have English primary and secondary schools. 47% of all Allophone pupils prefer to enroll in English junior colleges: this is interpreted as a proof of the poor attraction power of French.

As for the quality of language issue, the last topic treated in this paper, it has become clear that supporters of an endo-normative standard are losing ground and it seems to be generally admitted that officializing a local standard would discriminate against the growing number of French-speaking immigrants. The current status quo in favor of 'international French' (the exo-normative standard) is likely to be maintained in the foreseeable future despite the imminent (but regularly postponed since 2007) publication of a standard Quebec French dictionary.

The facts presented in this paper should be assessed in their larger context. In their early years Quebec's language policies clearly favored state intervention in accordance with the then dominant social democratic credo. As clearly expressed in the language laws of 1974 and 1977, the state set forth rules on the use of French not only in the public sector but also in private businesses, on commercial signs, etc. (for a more detailed presentation, see Maurais, 1989). Later on, the insistence on legal obligations or prohibitions became less prominent and it became a habit to repeat in various official documents that the state was to set the example (this trend was initiated in a 1996 report, cf. Rapport, 1996: 229). State interventionism left place to a growing number of incentives: year in and year out, the OQLF gives more than a dozen, at times almost a score of recognition awards, the CSLF hands

out seven medals and four prizes, and the Government of Quebec gives a $30,000 award to an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the quality and diffusion of the French language in Quebec. At the turn of the century, the application of language policies was further diluted under the growing influence of Neoliberalism in Quebec politics.

At the 4 September 2012 general election the sovereignist Parti Québécois regained power by a narrow margin and could form a minority government. Its electoral platform included propositions to strengthen French in Montreal, eliminate bridging schools, restrict access to English junior colleges and adopt a new tougher Charter of the French Language. Minority government situation permitting, this would mean a change of direction towards greater state interventionism. In other words, it could mean the end, or the postponement, of Neoliberal language policies.

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