Geopolitics of French in Francophone Sub-Saharan Africa

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Attitudes, Language Use, and Identities

By

Ibrahima Diallo

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For Binani D. Antonino-Diallo

Born equal, same and different
In this world, we live like in a tent.
Nonetheless far away from Binani
Albeit it does move dixit Galilei.
Never lose your boots and roots
In the era of routes and roads.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire)
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
MNE	*Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale* Ministry of National Education
OCAM	*Organisation Commune Africaine et Malgache* Common African and Malagasy Organisation
OIF	*Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* International organisation La Francophonie
SADEC	Southern African Development Community

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Je prétends avec conviction et sérieux que l'Afrique francophone n'est pas décolonisée, que le toubab est toujours là, dirigeant nos Grands Chefs, qui obéissent précipitamment; et quand on obéit précipitamment, on court précipitamment et quand un Grand Chef sous commandement court précipitamment, il écrase sans pitié son people, il l'affame et il le torture[1].

I can assert with conviction and honesty that Francophone Africa is not decolonised, that the white man is still around, leading our Big Chiefs, who obey hurriedly; and when one obeys hurriedly, one runs hurriedly and when a Big Chief under command runs hurriedly, he mercilessly crushes his people, starves them and tortures them.

Le malheur de l'Afrique c'est d'avoir rencontré la France[2].

The misfortune of Africa is to have encountered France.

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[1] Makhily Gassama, *Politique Et Poétique Au Sud Du Sahara* (Dakar Abis éditions, 2013), 89.
[2] Aimé Césaire, 25 June 1913.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This book addresses the geopolitical, geolinguistic, and geostrategic challenges of French in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa. Using Senegal as a case study, I also examine the languages used by the Senegalese people and their attitudes towards languages, specifically, Senegalese languages, French, and English. To further understand language issues in post-independence Francophone sub-Saharan Africa, in general, and Senegal, in particular, I analyse the views of the Senegalese people on the current place of these languages in the education system and whether or not more importance should be placed on them in education.

The French language epitomises the long and tumultuous colonial history of France in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa. It also reflects deliberate language policy choices as well as other education and political decisions undertaken by African leaders on gaining independence from France. Under colonial domination, the French language and culture, which were imposed upon Africans, were resisted and rejected because the colonial system was constructed on military subjugation, economic exploitation, and cultural oppression. However, following independence from France, most language policies implemented under colonial domination were maintained and post-independence education policies and language education choices gave French a prominent role in Francophone sub-Saharan African countries. For example, after independence, in all former French (and Belgian) colonies, French was chosen as either the only official language or one of several. Given this official status, after independence, the use of the French language strengthened in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa. From being a language imposed upon Africans under colonisation, French became the self-imposed language for education, work, mobility, and (international) communication. However, despite being an official language and despite the prestige and importance associated with French in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa, from the 1970s, strong and earnest voices drawing on national ideology as well as scientific evidence challenged the policies and attitudes that have enshrined French monolingual domination in education. It was generally accepted that the

post-independence French-only education policy was one of the main obstacles to successful education and literacy programs in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa. Gradually, the education systems in post-independence Francophone sub-Saharan Africa came under immense pressure to develop educational models in which African languages would play a significant role, particularly in early childhood education.

1.1 Background

Francophone sub-Saharan African education systems are still finding ways to redefine themselves and accommodate African languages in their education policies, some more successfully than others. Meanwhile, English has emerged as an important language both in Africa and elsewhere in the world. For example, the arrival on the world stage of such emerging economies as Brazil, China, India, and South Africa has had a significant impact on Africa in general and Francophone sub-Saharan Africa in particular. The world is attracted to Africa, thanks to its resources as well as the economic and financial opportunities it offers. In response, West Africa in particular, which has the largest concentration of French-speaking countries in the world, has strengthened its regional economic and financial integration (e.g. the Economic Community of West African States and the West African Economic Monetary Union). Francophone West African countries, like other regions in Africa, have opened up their economies and markets to the rest of the world, resulting in significant economic progress that has made Francophone sub-Saharan African countries the fastest growing economies on the continent[1].

Increasingly, Francophone sub-Saharan Africans look elsewhere for alternatives in relation to further education, migration, economic and business opportunities, and financial and trading partners. Consequently, but indirectly, the attitudes of Francophone Africans towards English have changed considerably because English, which was perceived by many as the language of the English-speaking world, with little value in their own countries, has now emerged as an important language for many in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa. Interest in English has surged owing to globalisation and the significant changes taking place in Africa, general dissatisfaction with France and its policies, and with the policy model in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa. For example, Francophone sub-Saharan Africans now seek to expand their education, migration, and employment

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[1] Lynsey Chutel, "It's Time to Learn French If You're a Private Equity Investor in Africa," in *Quartz Africa* (17 March 2017).

opportunities beyond France and the French-speaking world by exploring the Anglo-American sphere. In addition, Francophone sub-Saharan African countries have recently expanded their business, financial, and trade ties to Asia, the Middle East and other African countries. Today, the main economic and financial partners and, increasingly, education destinations of Francophone sub-Saharan African countries are non-French-speaking countries. These include, on the one hand, English-speaking African countries (e.g. Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Kenya) and, on the other hand, China, India, and the Middle East. This means that in order to reach out to their new partners, Francophone sub-Saharan Africans are expected to communicate in a language other than French.

In this changing local and global context, both in Africa and globally, English has become the default language for communication between Francophone sub-Saharan Africans and their new trading and financial partners. Senegal is an interesting case study to illustrate and understand the geopolitical, financial, and economic changes in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa. The country is faced with a complex linguistic situation because of its long colonial experience with France, its multifaceted socio-demographic and linguistic make-up, and also the desire of the Senegalese people to maintain their own languages as well as to meet the demands for international communication, mainly in French and English. In addition to its commercial ties with France, Senegal has expanded and reinforced its economic, financial, and trade ties with other African countries, China, India, Turkey, and Middle Eastern countries.

Another reason for using Senegal as a case study is that Senegal played a significant part in the colonial history of West Africa, as it was one of the most strategic outposts of French colonial power in West Africa. Saint Louis was the most important French colonial settlement in Africa and Dakar was the seat of *Afrique Occidentale Française* (French West Africa)[2]. Thanks to its strategic location, the French occupied and settled in Saint Louis as early as 1638 in order to tighten their military control and strengthen their economic domination of the region. Gradually, the French established the first French schools in their colonies and imposed their language, culture, and values. Subsequently, they banned local education institutions (e.g. madrasas and other Islamic schools) and the use of indigenous languages in their public institutions[3]. The imposition of French continued until the end

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[2] French West Africa was a federation of French colonies in West Africa between 1895 and 1960. Saint Louis and then Dakar served as its capital.

[3] Denise Bouche, *L'enseignement Dans Les Territoires Français De L'afrique Occidentale De 1817 À 1920. Mission Civilisatrice Ou Formation D'une Élite?* (Lille: Univeristé de Lille., 1975).

of the colonial rule, when Senegal gained independence in 1960. Paradoxically, the first post-independence language and education authorities maintained French as the only official language and the Senegalese languages did not receive any significant support or acknowledgement. The implementation of a policy to recognise and empower the Senegalese languages only began in the 1970s.

In Senegal, as in many parts of Francophone sub-Saharan Africa, the French language has experienced noticeable growth and strengthening. However, the attitudes towards the French language and, to a large extent, towards France have considerably deteriorated against the backdrop of the increased use of Senegalese languages and the growing interest and demand for English[4]. Studies conducted elsewhere in Francophone sub-Saharan African countries have reached the same conclusions about the increased importance of English in Francophone Africa[5]. France and French are facing challenges in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa that potentially may damage the historical and linguistic ties between the two. Also, in a noticeable trend, more and more Francophone sub-Saharan Africans are resorting to English because of its linguistic value in the marketplace and also because, unlike French, it offers a new, unrestricted identity free of colonial undertones. For most Francophone sub-Saharan Africans, this new identity is globalised, cosmopolitan, and forward-looking.

1.2 Scope

This book falls within the field of applied linguistics and language education policy. It focuses on the geopolitical, geolinguistic, and geostrategic challenges of France and French in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa against the backdrop of local and global changes taking place in Africa in general, and in the Francophone sub-Saharan region in particular. Using post-independence Senegal as a case study, it also examines language issues in post-independence sub-Saharan Africa. In focusing on Senegal, the book describes language use and attitudes towards Senegalese languages, French (the former colonial language) and English (the global language), as

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Joseph Gaucher, *Les Débuts De L'enseignement En Afrique Francophone* (Paris: Le Livre Africain, 1968). Ibrahima Diallo, *Politics of National Languages in Postcolonial Senegal* (New York Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2010).

[4] Ibrahima Diallo, "Les Défis Linguistiques Et Géopolitiques Du Français En Afrique Au Sud Du Sahara," *Australian Journal of French Studies* 48, no. 1 (2011).

[5] Hywel Coleman, "The English Language in Francophone West Africa [La Langue Anglaise En Afrique De L'ouest Francophone]," (Dakar -Senegal: The British Council, 2013).

well as the Senegalese people's views on the current place of these languages in the education system of Senegal. It incorporates a large section of the Senegalese people (students, business people, the general population, and senior civil servants) in order to understand language use in a range of public and private domains with different interlocutors (e.g. family members and neighbours), as well as their attitudes towards languages in Senegal (Senegalese languages, French, and English). The book shows the ways in which the Senegalese people construct their relationship with languages and the extent to which local imperatives as well as external demands (linguistic, educational, economic, and financial) shape language use, attitudes towards languages, and views on the place and importance that should be given to languages in education. Additionally, the book shows that the importance accorded to languages in Senegal is determined by identity issues (i.e. the need to learn Senegalese languages to maintain Senegalese cultures and values) and is shaped by the desire to learn international languages to communicate and engage with the French and the non-French-speaking worlds.

1.3 Aims

The primary focus of this book is to explore the linguistic contexts in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa. By using Senegal as a case study, it is able to examine current language use and practices, attitudes towards languages, and views on languages in education against the backdrop of the geopolitical, geolinguistic, and geostrategic challenges faced by France and French in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa. The book aims to:

- discuss the geopolitical, geolinguistic, and geostrategic challenges of France and French in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa;
- identify language use in various contexts and with various interlocutors in Senegal;
- describe the changing language dynamics in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa owing to changes in finance, trade, diplomacy, and context;
- examine the attitudes of Senegalese people towards Senegalese languages, French, and English;
- analyse the current importance of Senegalese languages, French, and English in the Senegalese education system; and
- understand language use, attitudes towards languages, and the place and importance of languages in education.

Understanding language use, attitudes, and the importance accorded to (Senegalese and non-Senegalese) languages in education is significantly important for strategic language planning and for the articulation of future language policies that integrate the current and future language needs of Francophone sub-Saharan Africans. For this reason, it is necessary, first, to examine colonial language policies and practices in Senegal and Francophone sub-Saharan Africa and, second, to analyse post-independence language policies and practices in Senegal and Francophone sub-Saharan Africa.

In order to arrive at recommendations for language policy in Senegal that can be expanded to Francophone sub-Saharan Africa, I use Senegal as a case study and from the research findings, I draw conclusions for a new framework for the relationship between France and Francophone sub-Saharan African countries.

1.4 French language in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa

When we look at the French language, its evolution, and its spread in the world, we notice that Francophone Africa is the last bastion of French in the face of its decline in some areas and stagnation in other areas since the end of World War II. For example, despite huge financial investments and tireless political and administrative efforts, supported by the establishment of *Alliances Françaises* (French Language and Cultural Centres) and *Instituts Français* (French Institutes) all over the world, the growth of the French language and culture in terms of the number of speakers has not been as successful as it is in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa[6]. In many parts of the world the number of speakers of French has not considerably increased. In fact, in North America and Western Europe, the number of learners as well as the number of speakers of French has dropped or stagnated[7]. In some areas (e.g. in Europe and the UK), the teaching of French has lost

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[6] Diallo, "Les Défis Linguistiques Et Géopolitiques Du Français En Afrique Au Sud Du Sahara."

[7] See Jacques Maurais and Michael A Morris, *Languages in a Globalising World* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
See Kamal Salhi, ed. *French in and out of France : Language Policies, Intercultural Antagonisms and Dialogue* (2002).

momentum since 2010, with the numbers of those learning French as a foreign language having dropped by 8% in Europe[8].

Similarly, the use of French is in decline in European institutions. According to Jacot, "the regression [of French] is also obvious in all international organisations and on their sites, even when French is an official language or working language"[9]. Jacot gave the example of the European Commission in Brussels: only 15% of its texts are published initially in French to serve as a basis for discussion before being translated[10].

While French is declining or stagnating in some regions, in Africa, the number of speakers has increased significantly, and the number has continued to increase after the former French colonies gained independence. Because of its population growth and the post-independence language policies that have given French an important official status, the number of French speakers on the African continent continues to gallop and the potential for increase remains indisputable and unmeasurable. According to Jacot:

> In its projections, the OIF[11] (*Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie*) anticipates that by 2050, Africa, where already half of the Francophones in the world live, will have approximately 85% of the 715 million speakers, thanks to its birth rates. This is on the condition, however, that schooling continues to make progress on this continent and they continue to teach the French language[12].

In 2005, for example, more than 50% of the learners of French in the world were in Africa and the Indian Ocean[13]. In addition, according to the 2005 estimates of the OIF, in 2006, the majority of so-called Francophones in the world were in Africa, which is a population that exceeds more than

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[8] Alexandre Wolff, "The French Language Worldwide," in *La language française dans le monde*, ed. Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (Paris: Nathan, 2014), 11.

[9] Martine Jacot, "Le Français Progresse En Afrique Mais Il Décline En Europe," *Le Monde* 13 Octobre 2010, 11. [Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own].

[10] Ibid.

[11] The OIF, known as the International Organisation of *La Francophonie*, is a large international organisation originally created to bring together countries and regions in the world that have a substantial number of French speakers. According to its website, in 2014, the number of French speakers in the world amounted to 274 million, spread through five continents. In July 2018, there were 84 members: 58 state and government members and 26 state observers.

[12] Jacot, "Le Français Progresse En Afrique Mais Il Décline En Europe." [Translation]

[13] Alexandre Wolff, "La Francophonie…Combien De Divisions?," in *Le français enjeux du XXIème siècle* (Paris: MFI/RFI/OIF, 2009); ibid., 11.

45% (compared to only 42%) of the total French speakers. This trend, which was already noticed by the *Observatoire de la Language Francaise* (Observatory of the French Language), was confirmed in its 2014 publication. Between 2010 and 2014, while the average growth of learners of French in the world was 6%, sub-Saharan Africa recorded a phenomenal 44% increase in the number of learners of French, trailed by North Africa and the Middle East with 7% and Asia and Oceania with 4%[14]. According to the same report and during the same four-year period, there was

> 15% more in sub-Saharan Africa. There were not only substantial increases in French speakers in percentages but also in the overall numbers of people in some countries: an average of 30% between 2010 and 2014 in Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Congo, Gabon, and Senegal[15].

This increase confirms the argument Chaudenson presented in 2003:

> It seems obvious to me, as I have been repeating over the past ten years, that the future of French in the world will be determined in Africa and not in Poland nor in Vietnam. It is indeed only there that there are masses of potential French speakers and a social demand favouring that language[16].

1.5 Sub-Saharan Africa in Francophonie

Today, all former French colonies in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa are members of the OIF, with different membership statuses. These are: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Comoros, the Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Gabon, Guinea, Equatorial Guinea, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, Senegal, the Seychelles, and Togo. In addition to these countries, the three former Belgian colonies are also members of the OIF: the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC, formerly Zaire), Burundi, and Rwanda. Cameroon and Togo were former German colonies but Togo and part of Cameroon fell to France after World War II. This makes a total of 21 African countries members of the OIF where French is 'the only official language or in sharing'. However, in nine other African countries, also member states of the OIF, French has a status of 'a language in sharing': Cape Verde, Egypt, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritius, Mauritania, Morocco, Sao Tome and Principe,

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[14] Ibid. [Translation]
[15] Ibid., 8. [Translation]
[16] Robert Chaudenson, *Geolinguistics, Geopolitics, Geostrategy: The Case of French* (2003), 297.

and Tunisia. Two observing members also share the language-in-sharing membership status: Mozambique and Ghana. In total, among the 54 state and government members of the OIF, 29 (or more than 50%) are in Africa and the Indian Ocean. This means that the highest concentration of French-speaking countries in the world is in sub-Saharan Africa[17].

However, demands for greater recognition of local languages and cultures that began during the colonial days intensified after independence. Advocates for the promotion of African languages, including teachers, political leaders, and unionists, among others, placed intense pressure on their governments. Subsequently, their governments gave up and put in place policies and administrative measures to give more power to African languages, especially in education. In reality, these measures did not have a significant impact on the fate of the African languages, as in most Francophone sub-Saharan African countries, the hegemony of French continues in public institutions (e.g. administration, the judiciary, and education), while African languages remain in the background. The main reason is that all these policy measures and efforts undertaken to empower African languages face a range of issues. Despite obstacles to promoting African languages in education, Francophone sub-Saharan Africans continue to seek inspiration in their own languages, cultures, and religions. Most importantly, they continue to use their own languages and practise their cultures to such an extent that French has lost considerable space, importance, and prestige in many domains in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa. First and foremost, for the educated Francophone minority of sub-Saharan Africans, the French language alone cannot express their complex identities, while for the majority, French remains a foreign language because not only can they not express themselves in French, but also it is the language that maintains socioeconomic inequality, keeps them away from power and marginalises them. Across Francophone sub-Saharan Africa, French literacy levels are remarkably low despite significant growth since independence. Another important contributing factor is that France has not delivered what most Francophone sub-Saharan Africans had hoped for or expected from their former colonial masters. As a consequence, they look for alternative opportunities and models elsewhere in the world, such as in the English language and culture and more and more Asian and Middle Eastern models.

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[17] This list does not include Algeria which is one of the largest French-speakers in Africa.

1.6 Outline

The book is divided into eight chapters. Chapter One provides the background, aims, and scope of the book. I also describe the French language in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa and the place of Francophone sub-Saharan Africa in the Francophone world. Chapter Two presents an overview of French in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa from the colonial period to the post-independence context. I describe the trajectory of French in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa from a peripheral language in the region to the powerhouse of French in the world. Chapter Three examines the geopolitical, geolinguistic, and geostrategic challenges of French in sub-Saharan Africa. Chapter Four presents a discussion of the language issues in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa, using Senegal as a case study. Chapter Five describes the research questions, the data collection tools and the methods used to collect data on language use, language attitudes, and the views of the Senegalese people on the current place and importance of languages in education. Chapter Six examines language use and attitudes towards Senegalese languages, French, and English in Senegal. Chapter Seven examines the views of the Senegalese people on the current place of these languages in education and whether or not more importance should be placed on these languages in education. Chapter Eight concludes the book. I summarise the findings of the research book, which I use to offer recommendations for the improvement of language planning and language-in-education policy in Senegal and beyond, especially for Francophone sub-Saharan African countries. Based on the findings and the geopolitical, geolinguistic, and geostrategic challenges of France and French in sub-Saharan Africa, I discuss the implications of the findings and suggest a new framework for the relationship between France and Francophone-sub-Saharan African countries.

Conclusion

This first chapter is an introduction to the book. I have provided a background to the book and have discussed its scope and aims. In particular, in Chapter One, I have shown that the book examines the geopolitical, geolinguistic, and geostrategic challenges of French in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa in the context of increasing dissatisfaction with France. In addition, using Senegal as a case study, I examine language use in Senegal, the attitudes of the Senegalese people towards languages (i.e. Senegalese languages, French, and English), and the views of the Senegalese people on the current place of these languages in the Senegalese education system and

what importance should be given to these languages in the country's education system.

I have also provided a context to the book by examining the French language in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa. I have shown that the region has become the powerhouse of French in the world thanks to increasing demography, language education policies that gave French a prominent role and the progress achieved in education in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa. In this chapter, I have also shown that as well as being the powerhouse of French in the world, Francophone sub-Saharan African countries are the most represented in the OIF, thus confirming Mazrui's views that "without Africa, French would be almost a provincial language"[18]. In this chapter, I have discussed that, while French and the African languages are competing for space in the linguistic scene in Senegal and, to a certain extent, in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa, English has become an equally important language for many in Senegal and in the Francophone sub-Saharan African region because of the changes happening on the continent and globally.

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[18] Ali Mazrui, "The Language of 'Francophonie' and the Race of the `Renaissance.'," in *Africa Beyond the Post-Colonial: Political and Socio-Cultural Identities*, ed. Ola Uduku and Alfred B. Zack-Williams (London: Ashgate 2004), 54.

CHAPTER TWO

THE TRAJECTORY OF FRENCH:
FROM THE PERIPHERY TO THE CENTRE

The language situation in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa is complex because, on the one hand, it epitomises the tumultuous colonial past between France and its former colonies in Africa, and on the other, it highlights the need to reconcile the complementary but competing and sometimes contradictory language education needs and demands faced in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa. In post-independence nation-building efforts, language education choices were one of the most challenging policy education undertakings because of the sensitivities about languages and cultures in Africa. Language policy makers faced a situation in which they needed to restore and strengthen African languages and cultures and boost the pride and identity shattered by more than a hundred years of colonisation and enslavement, but at the same time had to meet the compelling needs and demands to continue to use, learn, and promote the languages and cultures of the former colonial oppressors (i.e. French and English) for education and international communication.

In Francophone sub-Saharan Africa, the colonial legacy makes French an interesting case study for understanding language issues in the post-independence context. After independence from France, African pro-independence leaders and activists during colonial domination, who became political leaders in their own countries, took historic language education decisions to enshrine the domination of French in their Constitutions and education systems and pushed their own languages into the background. In all former French and Belgian colonies in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa, French is either the only official language or one of the official languages. However, because of pressures to give African languages more recognition, especially in education, many Francophone sub-Saharan African countries reformulated their language education policies to recognise the values of educating young Africans in their own languages as well as accommodating English in their school curriculums. For example, since the 1970s, there have been attempts in many Francophone sub-Saharan African countries to empower their languages in education, but they remain overshadowed by

the prestige and power of the language of the former colonial master. As for English, it was introduced in the education system as the most important foreign language after independence. This chapter is about the trajectory of French in post-independence Francophone sub-Saharan Africa. First, I discuss the trajectory of French in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa during colonial times. Second, I examine the language policy choices, which maintained and strengthened French in the post-independence era, and their consequences for education; namely, the low and poor education outcomes. Third, I analyse the ways in which the creation of the OIF contributed to strengthening French in Africa. Fourth, I discuss the ways in which the post-independence French-only policies were challenged and African languages were recognised and given more space in many bilingual education programs in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa. Despite favourable attitudes towards African languages, the French language and education in French remain undeniably more important than ever before.

2.1 French colonial policy and its consequences

French spread across several parts of the world through colonisation, including in the Americas, Asia, and Africa. However, it was in Africa where the French occupation and presence were the most marked and the longest. Through successive wars of conquest and political-military agreements (the Berlin Conference in 1884, the Treaty of Versailles in 1763, the various treaties of Paris), France succeeded in controlling much of West Africa. The French colonial power deployed all the means at its disposal to impose its language and culture on its public and private institutions. Because of the elitism of the education system, admissions of African students into the colonial schools were restricted and kept to a strict minimum. Only a handful of Africans had access to colonial education and for those who were offered admission, education did not generally exceed primary school level. The main aim of the colonial authorities was to train subordinate employees (clerks in the colonial administration and drivers) so that they could carry out tasks necessary for the administration of the colonies and to serve as intermediaries between the colonisers and the local populations[1].

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[1] See Diallo, *Politics of National Languages in Postcolonial Senegal*. Gaucher, *Les Débuts De L'enseignement En Afrique Francophone.*, *Les Débuts De L'enseignement*.

As colonial policies were built on ideological and racial prejudices, the French colonial power set up a plan for the 'assimilation' of Africans through its 'civilising mission' agenda in order to alienate them, considering them to be 'uncivilised races'. In carrying out this 'civilising mission', the teaching of French played a key role in the sense that the French language was considered the ultimate civilising tool. Thus, the colonisers spared no efforts in imposing their language, culture, and values on the local populations. They implemented an excessively repressive education policy that aimed at destroying African languages and cultures[2]. This education policy contributed considerably to the deterioration of the attitudes of the Africans towards colonial authorities and institutions. In fact, this exacerbated the hostility of the Africans towards the French language and culture and the colonial education system. As White points out, "there was growing resistance to the European education system, which for many Africans had become a symbol of political and cultural domination"[3]. The disinterest of Africans in the colonial schools led the Director of Indigenous Affairs in Senegal to note that despite a long presence of French in Africa, "not only did the population not speak French, but also the small number of indigenous people who knew a few words did not advertise the fact"[4]. The hostility of the Africans to the culture and language of the coloniser and their resistance to its repressive and humiliating policies radicalised anti-colonial demands and accelerated the mobilisation of Africans in their struggle for independence.

As already highlighted, because of the elitist and ideological nature of the colonial school and its rejection by Africans after independence, the education outcomes under colonisation were disastrous in all the former French colonies. According to Bolibaugh, quoted by Bokamba:

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[2] Maurice Lallemand, *Comme Un Long Fleuve Fertile De Passion Et D'actions Éducatives* (Province de France Frères de l'Instruction Chrétienne de Ploermel, 1992).; Eyamba Eyamba Bokamba, "French Colonial Policy in Africa and Their Legacies," in *Language Planning: Focusschrift in Honnor of Joshua a, Fishman on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. D.F. Marshall (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1991), 190.

[3] Bob W. White, "Talk About School: Education and the Colonial Project in French and British Africa, (1860-1960)," *Comparative Education* 32, no. 1 (1996): 12.

[4] CRDS, "Instruire Pour Assimiler. L'école Sénégalaise Au Milieu Du Xixe Siècle.," in *In Moniteur du Sénégal* (Saint Louis. Senegal: Centre de Recherche et de Documention du Sénégal, 1975), 2.

… in 1957 the numbers of students, including Europeans, who had passed
the baccalaureate were as follows: Guinea—5, Côte d'Ivoire—69,
Senegal—172. In 1960, 31 Malians were admitted to the baccalaureate
[equivalent to passing the Year 12 examination][5].

According to UNESCO[6], in July 1960, the Congolese education system
(referring to the Democratic Republic of the Congo) had not even produced
a secondary school teacher, and there were no more than a dozen university
graduates in the country. This observation was confirmed by Makouta-
Mboukou (1973), quoted by Chumbow and Bobda[7]. He points out that in
1973, 13 years after independence and several decades of colonial
domination, the DRC, considered "one of the most advanced French-
speaking states in sub-Saharan Africa, could boast only six qualified
secondary school teachers"[8].

Elsewhere in French-speaking Africa, the situation was similar. In
Senegal in 1960, for example, the primary school enrolment rate was only
36% for boys and 0% for girls. Ka, moreover, argues that only 11% of
Senegalese men and 1% of Senegalese women were able to read and write
French correctly that same year[9]. According to Ki-Zerbo, quoted by Djité,
in Côte d'Ivoire:

> Only one in four boys and one in five girls, or 20% of the total population,
> access secondary education, and only about 20 in 1,000, or 2% of that
> remaining 20%, access tertiary education. More than 50% of these 2% drop
> out during the first years of higher education, and only 20% of these 2%
> obtain a university degree[10].

Weinstein also points out that in Madagascar, a decade after
independence, of the 63,000 schoolchildren who sat the examination in
1970-1971, 36,000, or 57%, had failed. A higher percentage, 66%, had
failed at *Brevet d'Études du Premier Cycle* (BEPC), the first high school
diploma. At university level, failure rates were comparable.

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[5] Bokamba, "French Colonial Policy in Africa and Their Legacies," 190.
[6] UNESCO, *Compendium Des Statistiques Relatives À L'analphabétisme* (Paris:
UNESCO, 1990), 80.
[7] Beban Sammy Chumbow and Augustin Simo Bobda, "French in West Africa: A
Sociolinguistic Perspective," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*
141, no. 1 (2000): 42.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Omar Ka, "Une Nouvelle Place Pour Le Français Au Sénégal?," *The French
Review* 67, no. 2 (1993): 79.
[10] Paulin Djité, "Language Planning in Côte D'ivoire," *Current Issues in Language
Planning* 1, no. 1 (2000): 32.