5 An ambivalent picture

The Englishization of higher education in France

Françoise Le Lièvre

Abstract

In France, English has a hegemonic position in many domains, including education, despite European policy promoting linguistic and cultural diversity to better integrate citizens in democratic processes. In 2013, the Fioraso law modified the Toubon law by allowing French universities to teach in a foreign language. Under the law, the choice of English at the expense of any other foreign language seems to have become practice. However, this practice clashes with long-standing criticism of Englishization in France. In this chapter an ambivalent picture of Englishization in French higher education arises, revealing tensions between criticism and official language policy on the one hand and language practice on the other. Translingual practices in France generate a different view of Englishization in higher education.

Keywords: higher education, Englishization, commodification, translingual practices

1 Introduction

In an environment that has become extremely competitive as a consequence of globalization, internationalization has become one of the major concerns of institutions of higher education. On a global scale, we are currently witnessing a commodification of education and research as a consequence of free trade agreements on services (Truchot, 2016). Higher education in Europe is torn between the commodification of education and research and the remains of a humanist tradition in academia. This humanist tradition finds its expression in the Humboldtian model of higher education that

places an emphasis not on the learning of knowledge and skills that can be utilized, but on a process of human development (*Bildung*). In France, many critics of the Englishization of higher education have the humanist tradition in mind and associate it with issues of quality, identity, and diversity.

The aim of this paper is to explore the way in which the tension between the two perspectives on higher education manifests itself in France. In section 2, I sketch the socio-historical context of the internationalization of higher education through English in France. Section 3 then focuses on the consequences of the commodification of higher education. Section 4 addresses the public debate about the Englishization of French higher education. Next, in section 5, I will argue that a focus on translingual practices offers an alternative perspective of Englishization that differs from those advanced by proponents and opponents in the French debate. Finally, I conclude by contending that language policies should meet the challenge of combining the centrality of English with the existence of linguistic pluralism.

2 The internationalization of higher education

In 1909, in an article devoted to the internationalization of higher education, Leclère questions ‘the immobility of the Universities, [...] their excessive nationalization [...] (and) their sedentary spirit’. He contrasts his time with the exodus of students which marked Europe in the Middle Ages. This led him to ask: ‘Why shouldn’t Universities form an international federation?’ (Leclère, 1909, p. 429).¹ This article reminds us that the debates on the internationalization of higher education are not new. However, the internationalization of universities now follows a different star, namely a neoliberal doxa (Giroux, 2014). This doxa is the idea that promoting competition leads to quality improvement and cost reduction. In higher education, this means that universities worldwide compete to attract the best students and researchers so that they score well in the academic competition, that is, rank highly (Sabaté-Dalmau, 2020).

Over the course of the 1990s, on the basis of a neoliberal agenda, international organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

1 ‘[L]’immobilité des Universités, [...] leur excessive nationalisation [...] (et) leur esprit casanier’; ‘Pourquoi les Universités ne formeraient-elles pas une fédération internationale?’ Translations unless otherwise indicated are by the editors.

(OECD) triggered reforms in higher education. Since the Bologna process² initiated by the Declaration of the Sorbonne (1998) in particular – even if its primary objectives were favourable to the diversity of languages, cultures, and education systems – we have witnessed a worldwide commodification of the products of research and higher education. According to the OECD (1996), the generation and teaching of academic knowledge plays a key role in the enhancement of the competitiveness of economies and therefore on economic growth ('knowledge economy', OECD, 1996, p. 9). In this conception, knowledge has become assimilated to an economic good, entailing the 'commodification' of higher education. The Lisbon Strategy of the European Union (2000) aimed to define the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world. In the consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (incorporating the Lisbon Treaty) (European Commission, 2012), Article 179 concerning 'Research and Technological Development' activities specifies:

The union shall have the objective of strengthening its scientific and technological bases by *achieving a European Research Area* in which researchers, scientific knowledge and technology circulate freely, and encouraging it to become more competitive, including in its industry, while promoting all the research activities deemed necessary by virtue of other chapters of the Treaties. (Author's emphasis)

In April 2008 the Ministers in charge of Research launched the 'Ljubljana Process' in order to give new impetus to setting up the European Research Area (ERA) and help increase the competitiveness of the European Union (Slovenian Presidency of the EU, 2008). The European strategy consists also of setting up the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)³ comparable to that of North America. Freed from public control, institutions of higher education should enjoy a degree of operational autonomy that strengthens their position on the market. The aim is to facilitate the mobility of students and researchers, and to reduce international obstacles to mobility so that the best universities can attract the best students and most talented researchers.

2 This process led to a common architecture of university degrees (licence, master's and doctorate) and to the establishment of a common system of organization on the basis of ECTS (European Credits Transfer System).

3 <https://ehea.info/>

Mobility under internationalization very largely benefits institutions of higher education in English-speaking countries.⁴ In 2018, the top three destinations for international students in the world were the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. The United States is continuing to increase its dominance. Germany is in fourth place followed by France. This state of affairs had already been deplored in a report to the Senate about Campus France,⁵ a public institution charged with promoting French higher education abroad and welcoming foreign students and researchers to France. The report notes that at a time when 'student mobility at the global level increased by 46% between 2009 and 2016, France only welcomed 13% additional foreign students and is *losing market share*'⁶ (Sénat, 2017, p. 23).⁷ While the Senate report specifies several avenues to become competitive in the higher education market, such as the awarding of scholarships or better communication,⁸ it appears that to be competitive and obtain better visibility in international rankings (such as that of Shanghai in particular), traditional public institutes of higher education are now forced to reorganize to become enterprises that are good at marketing their services: education and research (Gouvernement, n.d.). For instance, since 2009, the University of Strasbourg has been reorganized around a prestigious scientific institution linked to mass institutions that have a cultural vocation. On 1 January 2012, both the University of Aix-Marseille and the University of Lorraine each merged their three universities adopting the status of EPSCP (Établissement public à caractère scientifique, culturel et professionnel). EPSCP are national institutions of higher education and research enjoying pedagogical, scientific, administrative and financial autonomy. A new legal framework⁹ has therefore been gradually implemented in all institutions of higher education, modifying their rules and practices in terms of financial governance and human resources management.

Despite the new legal framework that must offer universities the opportunity to take on global competition in higher education, there is a lack

4 https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Learning_mobility_statistics

5 <https://www.campusfrance.org/en>

6 Author's emphasis.

7 '[L]a mobilité étudiante au niveau mondial a augmenté de 46 % entre 2009 et 2016, la France n'a accueilli que 13 % d'étudiants étrangers supplémentaires et *perd donc des parts de marché*'.

8 According to the 2017 Senate report, African students orient primarily to English-speaking countries (42%), then to French-speaking countries (34%). 18% of French-speaking students opt for English-speaking countries, while 11% of English-speaking students opt for French-speaking countries.

9 Law n° 2007-1199 of August 10, 2007 relating to the freedoms and responsibilities of universities, known as the LRU law.

of the reliable data that is necessary for making good policy. Valid and, above all, shared indicators that can properly inform students and allow a methodologically sound comparison between European universities¹⁰ are a step in this direction. The lack has, however, gradually been filled with indicators and rankings from other countries, notably China and the United States. The ranking which occupies a prominent position on the international scene and strongly influences the dynamics of the global higher education market is the Academic Ranking of World Universities or Shanghai Ranking.¹¹ As Martins (2019) points out, the main criterion of the Academic Ranking of World Universities is the productivity of research, in particular through the number of articles published in journals such as *Science* and *Nature*, the citations of articles by researchers ranked by Web of Science or Science and Social Science Citations, the number of professors who have won either a Nobel Prize or a Fields Medal, etc. As the author further points out, these criteria tend to favour old and prestigious Western universities, in particular those which have produced or attracted Nobel laureates. The indicators give high value to publications in English and certain scientific journals of international fame, some of which are published by universities which occupy leading positions in world rankings. While in 2016-2017 only five French universities rose into the top 200 leading universities at the expense of universities in Singapore, Japan and Taiwan, the University of Paris-Saclay, established in January 2020, made a remarkable entry achieving the 14th place in the 18th edition of the Shanghai ranking (2020). France ranks fourth worldwide, just behind the United States, United Kingdom, and China in terms of the number of universities in the top 100. In this context, many commentators argue that the previous invisibility of French institutions in international rankings was due to the slow reorganization of French higher education and its lack of programmes in English.

3 Consequences of the commodification of higher education

As we have just seen, internationalization has become one of the major preoccupations of universities, because it allows them to compete better in the academic market. One of the consequences of the commodification of higher education, in France as in many other European contexts, is to propose courses in English, considered the indispensable lingua franca

10 See, for instance, the U-Multirank system: www.umultirank.org

11 www.shanghairanking.com

of our globalized world. This is often done without prior research into its real necessity and without appraisal of what students and staff want. The top-down implementation of a language policy promoting Englishization is characteristic of internationalization programmes in various countries (Aizawa & McKinley, 2020, p. 34; Lanvers & Hultgren, 2018). The proposal to offer more courses in English is made at a time when several French sociolinguists are making a plea to embrace and give value to linguistic diversity through recognition of regional and minority languages,¹² now accepted as *Langues de France* (Languages of France) (Beacco & Messin, 2010). It is noteworthy that, in line with European directives, France has for several years adopted a plurilingual and pluricultural perspective. During the construction of Europe, the prevailing orientations of the language policies were aimed at founding a European citizenship grounded in linguistic pluralism. The idea is that Europeans, united in diversity, are able to understand and speak languages different from their own.

Despite the European policy to cultivate linguistic pluralism, there is a tendency towards monolingualism based on the Englishization of higher education. English is a language unlike any other in the world. It occupies a vast sociolinguistic space and holds a dominant place on the planet (Bourdieu et al., 2001). No other language has ever reached such a degree of diffusion and speakers. The number of people who master English as a second language nowadays outnumbers the number of native speakers of English (Ethnologue, 2021). The 2017 edition of *Key data on teaching languages at school in Europe* (European Commission, 2017) reports the very high degree of dissemination of English in Europe, such that in almost all European countries, English is the foreign language studied by the majority of students in primary and secondary education. The percentage of students learning English continues to increase. The change is most marked among the youngest – in primary education. In France, in line with eight other European countries (Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Malta, Austria, Poland, Liechtenstein, and North Macedonia), most students (over 90%) learn English from the first grade until school graduation. It should be noted that in France, as in other countries, the learning of a foreign language is compulsory for students from the start of the primary school.

Héran (2013) conducted a survey between 2007 and 2009 on the use of modern languages by the French scholars. In the exact sciences, the use

12 At the end of 1997, the French government began a debate on plurilingualism on the occasion of the establishment of the process which was to lead to France signing of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (see for example Viaut, 2020)

of French has become marginal, with a low proportion in the human and social sciences, while English occupies a dominant position in all domains of research (see also Le Lièvre, 2017; Le Lièvre & Forlot, 2014). Publications, meetings or scientific symposia are mainly in English. Hérán (2013) also showed that 25% of the teachers regularly or occasionally teach courses in English in higher education. As Truchot (2016) notes, the use of English as a *lingua franca* in higher education was first established in the 1990s¹³ in countries with a 'small distribution' language such as those of Northern Europe and the Netherlands. Countries in Central Europe, Southern Europe, Germany, and finally France followed.

The Englishization of French higher education accelerated in the new millennium, as more and more courses were offered in English, despite the Toubon Law. This law, named after Jacques Toubon who was Minister of Culture and Francophonie under the presidency of François Mitterrand, was passed by the French Parliament on August 4, 1994, and imposed a guarantee on the use of French in the media, at work, in everyday life and in education (Journal officiel, 1994). Article 1 of this law states: 'As the language of the Republic, according to the Constitution, the French language is a fundamental element of France's personality and heritage. It is the language of teaching, work, communication and public services. It is the privileged link between the states forming the Francophone community' (translation from Blattès, 2018, p. 36). In the context of this law, not only was there a quota regulation developed for radio stations to be obliged to play a certain number of French songs, but it was also stimulated to use French words, for instance *ordinateur* and *infox*, for English words such as *computer* or *fake news*. Blattès emphasizes that the Toubon Law entailed with regard to education 'that teaching, exams, dissertations and theses must be in French, in public and private schools and universities alike' (Blattès, 2018, p. 36). An exception is made for the teaching of foreign languages, special education (i.e., international schools) and visiting professors. There is an interesting mismatch between the spirit of the Toubon Law and the language practice. Even if it is incompatible with the law, since the beginning of this century universities have been offering more courses as a consequence of

13 The project to internationalize higher education began in the late 1960s in Sweden. As Cabau remarks: 'It was part of the line of internationalization and democratization of Swedish society by relying, among other things, on the introduction of the compulsory learning of English for all students from 1962' ('Il s'inscrivait dans la ligne d'internationalisation et de démocratisation de la société suédoise en s'appuyant, entre autres, sur l'introduction de l'apprentissage obligatoire de l'anglais pour tous les élèves dès 1962') (2014, p. 60).

the commodification of higher education. It is not surprising that Béatrice Khaïat, Director General of Campus France, remarked (France Culture, 2018):

Today, we no longer have a choice, English is no longer a foreign language. The United States, England and Oceania attract students from all over the world, but there are new players: China, Russia, the Netherlands. In this market, France must urgently catch up.¹⁴

Due to the focus on the global market of higher education, a decree of April 3, 2020 (Journal officiel, 2020) requires all students enrolled in institutions of higher education wishing to obtain the *Licence* diploma obtain certification in the English language. Article 10 of the decree specifies:

Specifically with regard to the language skills mentioned [...], the test methods allow the student's progress to be verified between entry into the *licence* and graduation. A certification of the level he has obtained in the chosen language, defined with reference to the European framework, is issued to the student when he obtains his *licence*. [...] This certification concerns at least the English language; in this case, it is subject to an external evaluation and is recognized internationally and by the socio-economic world. The award of the diploma is condition on providing justification of this certification.

In a letter of February 12, 2020, the Office of the Minister for Education specified that:

The English language certification [...] is a choice of the government to better support companies in competitive international markets by allowing each student to certify, at the end of their first cycle of studies, their competence in English. Since English is indeed the language of commercial and scientific exchange, so it is the choice of this compulsory certification that has been retained.¹⁵

14 'Aujourd'hui, on n'a plus le choix, l'anglais n'est plus une langue étrangère. Les Etats-Unis, l'Angleterre ou l'Océanie attirent les étudiants du monde entier, mais il y a de nouveaux acteurs: la Chine, la Russie, les Pays-Bas. Dans ce marché, la France doit d'urgence rattraper son retard.'

15 The Minister for Education has responded in almost identical words to several députés and senators who had questioned the policy, for example, Assemblée Nationale, question No. 25706 (2020) <https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q15/15-25706QE.htm>

One of the most frequent reasons given for the use of English is that it helps to attract the best students from around the world. Jean-Loup Salzmann, president of the Conference of University Presidents (CPU) and one of the foremost voices, declared in 2013 (Pech, 2013):

In a French medical laboratory, more than half of the people speak only English! Our research evaluations are done in English, our European projects are done in English and when a professor from abroad comes to our universities, we speak to him in English. It has become the international language, no matter what those who are mortified think.¹⁶

Le Déaut's report¹⁷ *Refonder l'université, dynamiser la recherche, mieux coopérer pour réussir* [Rebuilding the university, boosting research, better cooperating for success] (2013), specified, in the same way, that the obligation to restrict the courses offered to foreign students to French-medium programmes had led to them being dissuaded from attending French institutes of higher education, and that the offer of instruction in English, which he called 'a privileged way for the recovery of our competitiveness' (2013, p. 62), 'would on the contrary strengthen our language if accompanied by an attractive offer of French as a foreign language'¹⁸ (Le Déaut, 2013, p. 64).¹⁹

16 'Dans un laboratoire français de médecine, plus de la moitié des gens ne parlent qu'anglais! Nos évaluations de recherche se passent en anglais, nos projets européens se font en anglais et quand un professeur venu de l'étranger est accueilli dans nos universités, on lui parle anglais. C'est devenu la langue internationale, quoi qu'en pensent les esprits chagrins.'

17 Member of Parliament, first Vice-President of the Parliamentary Office for the Evaluation of Scientific and Technological Choices.

18 Le Lièvre (2017) comments similarly on the regional scheme for higher education and research in Brittany (*Schéma régional de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche en Bretagne*, Regional Council of Brittany, 2013): 'The entry of Breton institutions in the global competition requires continuous improvements which make it possible to strengthen regional attractiveness. [...] This dimension appears essential in a global scientific community where English is the universal language of communication. Proficiency in the English language for our students is essential at this level, and training in English makes it easier to welcome international students. Moreover, in parallel, "French as a foreign language" training should be provided for foreign students' ('L'inscription des établissements, des sites bretons dans le concert mondial nécessite des améliorations continues qui permettent de renforcer l'attractivité régionale. [...] Cette dimension apparaît essentielle dans une communauté scientifique mondiale où l'anglais est la langue de communication universelle. La maîtrise de la langue anglaise pour nos étudiants est incontournable à ce niveau, et les formations en anglais favorisent l'accueil des étudiants internationaux. Au demeurant, il convient de développer en parallèle des formations "français langue étrangère" (FLE) pour les étudiants étrangers.')

19 '[Une] voie privilégiée pour le redressement de notre compétitivité'; 'assortie d'une offre attractive de français langue étrangère renforcerait au contraire notre langue'.

The same thinking permeates the Campus France site. The pages dedicated to courses offered in English and in France promote the slogan: 'French is not a requirement. Start out in English, your French will improve as well.'

It is no surprise that the so-called 'hard' sciences are the most 'Englishized'. One of the most common arguments advanced to motivate Englishization is that students who do not speak the local language do speak English. Under the European Higher Education Area, harmonization through English would allow increased mobility at the same time as it would reduce misunderstandings and conflicts. This is at odds with linguistic diversity, which might constitute a barrier to the harmonization.

Yet until very recently in France, the possibility for institutes of higher education to offer training in a language other than French was hampered by the Toubon Law. However, on July 22, 2013, the Fioraso Law, named after Minister for Higher Education and Research Geneviève Fioraso, was accepted by the French Parliament and expressed a different spirit and opened up a new era in higher education (République française, 2013). She argued: 'India has 60 million computer scientists and only sends us 3,000 students. We must multiply partnerships and, for this reason, have to offer courses in English. Otherwise, we will have five Proust specialists around a table.' She added: 'I love Proust. But sometimes the best weapon to support the Francophonie and our influence is English' (Soulé, 2013).²⁰ The Fioraso Law²¹ proposed 'to authorize teaching in a foreign language when it is provided under an agreement with a foreign or international institution.' The term foreign language did not refer to any language other than English. In addition to objectives relating to student success and the simplification of the higher education landscape, the Fioraso Law aimed to improve the influence of French research in order to increase the attractiveness of France for global elites, in particular students from non-French-speaking countries such as India, Korea, China, and Brazil, among others. Thus the Minister declared in an interview on 30 April 2013 (Gonzague, 2013): 'Ten years ago,

20 'J'aime Proust. Mais parfois la meilleure arme de la francophonie et de notre rayonnement est l'anglais.'

21 In the report to parliament on the use of the French language drafted by the DGLFLF (General Delegation for the French Language and Languages of France) one of the stated objectives of the law is to 'trace a path towards an economy of balanced knowledge, towards beneficial exchanges for France, through knowledge and mobility of students and researchers, through the development of European and global partnerships' ('tracer un chemin vers une économie de la connaissance équilibrée, vers des échanges bénéfiques à la France, par le savoir et la mobilité des étudiants et des chercheurs, par le développement de partenariats européens et mondiaux') (DGLFLF, 2013, p. 34).

we were third in welcoming foreign students, today we are fifth. Why have we lost so much in attractiveness? Because Germany has set up courses in English and has passed us! We have to catch up'.²² Because one of the criteria for internationalization is the percentage of foreign students enrolled in universities, Germany's attractiveness was cited as a model of success. The Fioraso Law should give a boost to internationalization. In the run-up to the adoption of this law, there was a heated public debate about Englishization in higher education in parliament and the media. But even after that, this subject regularly led to public controversies.

4 The French public debate about Englishization

English, in France, is much more than a foreign language because of the social and ideological functions that it serves. Due to centuries of cultural, political, and economic rivalry between France and England, in which the names Joan of Arc, Napoleon, and Charles de Gaulle (among others) stand out, English and French are seen as each other's antipodes in shaping a national identity and fulfilling an ideological function (Flaitz, 1988; Gordon, 1978). The related social function is that the national language binds citizens and thus contributes to social cohesion. That is why French is culturally, legally, and institutionally anchored. Regarding culture, the French government protects its own film and music industry from the Americanization associated with English (sometimes referred to as 'cocacolonization'). And with regard to the legal anchoring of French, the Toubon Law and Fioraso Law have already been mentioned. It can also be pointed out that in anticipation of the space that the Maastricht Treaty (1992) would create for the Englishization of the European Union, the then president François Mitterand urged a constitutional amendment. Since 1992, the French Constitution states that French is the language of the republic: 'La langue de la République est le français. L'emblème national est le drapeau tricolore, bleu, blanc, rouge. L'hymne national est la "Marseillaise". La devise de la République est "Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité"' (Article 2).²³ Institutions such as the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), Académie Française, Alliance Française and

22 'Il y a dix ans, nous étions 3es dans l'accueil des étudiants étrangers, aujourd'hui, nous sommes 5e. Pourquoi avons-nous tant perdu en attractivité? Parce que l'Allemagne a mis en place des cursus en anglais et nous est passée devant ! Il faut rattraper notre retard.'

23 'The language of the Republic is French. The national symbol is the tricolour flag, blue, white, red. The national anthem is the "Marseillaise". The motto of the Republic is "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity".'

Institut Français have also made important contributions to anchoring the French language over time.

Against the background of the cultural, legal, and institutional anchoring of French, it is not surprising that the Englishization in general and in higher education in particular has led to fierce public debates in France. Illustrative of this is the public debate that was conducted in the run-up to the Fioraso Law. The proponents and opponents of this law fought each other with fire and sword. The linguist Claude Hagège, an opponent of the Fioraso Law, spoke of a 'projet de loi porteur de cancer' ('cancerous bill').²⁴ In contrast, the *Libération* newspaper defended the law with the following front-page headline: 'Teaching in English, let's do it' (*Libération*, 20 May 2013).

The proponents point out that the Englishization of higher education is necessary if France is not to fall behind in a knowledge-based economy and lose its position of power in the world. Debré, a member of the French parliament, put it this way: 'we are waging an economic war, coupled with a scientific war, the first being supported by the second' (cited in Blattès, 2018, p. 100). By creating space for English-medium instruction programmes, the best students, especially from the BRICS countries,²⁵ would be attracted (Truchot, 2016) and thus new markets could be conquered and the influence of France on a diplomatic level would be preserved. It is expected that attracting international students will ultimately contribute to the economic growth of France. In addition, the chances of French students to get a good job in a global economy would be greatly increased with English-taught classes.

Opponents of the Fioraso Law argue that it is good to attract international students, but that this should be done through French as a medium of instruction and that English as a medium of instruction leads to domain loss. Moreover, they argue that the law creates linguistic inequality and undermines cultural diversity and the collective identity. For example, philosopher Michel Serre pointed to the loss of 'linguistic sovereignty in the face of Anglo-American imperialism' and the Académie française spoke of the 'marginalization of our language' (cited in Salomone, 2016, pp. 72-73).

An issue related to the domain loss that was central in the public debate is the question of what the consequences of the Englishization of higher education are for the Francophonie (i.e., the global community of people and countries that speak the French language). The opponents of the Fioraso Law argue that the Englishization of higher education is a threat to the

24 <https://meta.tv/claude-hagege-contre-le-projet-de-loi-fioraso/>

25 Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa.

Francophonie and undermines the *rayonnement* (i.e., influence) of France in the world. In contrast, the proponents say that the Fioraso Law will attract international students who learn the French language and culture and thus not only promote the language but also strengthen France's influence.

The defenders of French and the Francophonie use an alarmist rhetoric. For them, the quality of French, faced with the omnipresence of English, would diminish, which would precipitate domain loss. According to the French writer Frédéric Werst, not only is the French language marginalized, but the English spoken in higher education is a 'mediocre Globish' (McPartland, 2013). For this and other opponents of the Fioraso Law, the quality of education suffers from the fact that English-medium instruction in France is not of the same level as in Anglophone countries and students as well as teachers can express themselves more nuanced in French than in English. 'EMI [English-medium instruction] is only deemed legitimate if it is taught by a native speaker and in an Anglophone country' (Blattès, 2018, p. 102).

Besides domain loss, the loss of French influence in the world and the loss of quality as a consequence of Englishization are discussed in the public debate. This concerns the consequences for linguistic equity, cultural diversity, and collective identity. According to the opponents of the Englishization, inequality will only increase, because English is an additional barrier for some to participate in higher education. However, Minister Fioraso defended the law named after her by pointing out that it corrects inequalities. This law would allow all students to take English classes and not just those who attend the business schools and Grandes écoles where many programmes are in English anyway (Salomone, 2016, p. 71).

An argument often used by opponents of the Fioraso Law, such as the organization L'Observatoire Européen du Plurilinguisme, highlighted the fear that the Englishization would undermine linguistic diversity and the cultural diversity based on it. Given the ever-growing position of English in the world, the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie considers the promotion of English as a threat to linguistic and cultural diversity at the same time. However, several scholars point out that at an international level France advocates a multilingual language policy to build a barrier against English and preserve its own identity, but at the national level promotes monolingualism (Blanchet et al., 1999; Wright, 2006). The latter would be at the expense of minority languages such as Basque, Breton, and Corsican. On the basis of an assimilatory model, these minority languages are often called languages of France (*Langues de France*). Given this constellation, Blattès (2018, pp. 33-35) speaks of 'monolingualism on the inside,

multilingualism on the outside' and Coleman (2006, p. 8) of 'adopting a protective multilingualist stance'.

Besides the substantive points of contention in the public debate about the Fioraso Law, there is one issue that is no less interesting, namely the gap between the official language policy and practice. Deneire (2015, p. 67) points out that the official language policy is supported by a small conservative elite, but that the majority of French citizens do not seriously oppose Englishization. *De jure* there are all kinds of restrictions to the Englishization of higher education, but *de facto*, as the research by Hérans (2013) shows, more and more universities are offering English medium of instruction programmes. Even after the introduction of the Fioraso Law, this has not resulted in resistance to Englishization being silenced. In *Le Parisien* (June 16, 2019), the collective *Langue française* turned to President Macron for support in their fight against 'tout-anglais'. Their petition was signed by many worldwide.

5 Translingual practices

The outline of the public debate about the Englishization of higher education in France provides an ambivalent picture (Le Lièvre & Forlot, 2014). There is something to be said for both the opportunities and the threats that this process entails. The different views of the proponents and opponents suggest that there is a great contradiction, but things are never as bleak as they seem. This is especially evident from the gap between the official language policy and the current language practice. According to some, the concern about Englishization is of the older rather than the younger generation (Lakehal, 2011, p. 34). Estival and Pennycook underline that the vision of the Académie française is not representative of what all French think about English (Estival & Pennycook, 2011, p. 338).

The image of the Englishization of higher education in France remains ambivalent as long as no more empirical research is done into the effects of that process. For example, concerning EMI in France, Blattès (2018, p. 24) contends that: 'France is a latecomer in the global EMI trend which makes it an under-researched context. Very few studies have explored EMI in French universities from an empirical perspective.' It is remarkable that no time during the discussions on the Fioraso law, was there any mention of research studies or exploratory surveys on the real benefits that the use of English could represent. As Truchot (2013, p. 87) underlined, 'One would have expected that the foreseeable effects of such a bill would have been

the subject of preliminary studies and evaluations by the competent public authorities. However, that is not the case.²⁶ Due to the lack of such studies in France, it is interesting to look shortly at research abroad.

In 2011 the conference of German university rectors (*Hochschulrektorenkonferenz*) released a research report reviewing 10 years of Englishization of higher education in Germany. The effects were generally reported to be negative (HRK, 2011). The research report pointed out that most notably the quality of the English proficiency of teachers often leaves much to be desired. In a study carried out in Lausanne University, Usunier (2010) notes the loss of information in the transmission and reception of knowledge. Class interactions are reduced and students show greater passivity, which raises questions concerning didactics. Contrary to the suggestion of the proponents of the Fioraso Law that it promotes French language and culture, when non-Francophone international students study in France, Usunier's study shows that they are not very motivated to learn French language and culture. Finally, concerning costs, a Swiss study by Gazzola and Grin (2013) analysed the costs linked to the different linguistic regimes. Their study shows that the use of translation and interpretation, even if it is not free, remains more effective and more reasonable than a monolingual diet based on the English language alone.

In the reaction to the HRK report (2011), the German university rectors argue in favour of international openness sustained by language policies that aim both to preserve German and guarantee multilingualism. According to them, teaching and being taught in one's own language enables all skills to be fully exercised. They advocate the benefits of immersion in another educational culture for foreign students. Some of the northern European countries which were at the forefront of Englishization are now considering linguistic adjustments. For instance, in Finland the concept of 'linguistic parallelism' (Cabau, 2014, p. 66) has evolved, which consists of promoting the use of other languages in parallel with English as far as possible. In 2008, in Denmark a Centre for Internationalization and Parallel Language Use (CIP) was established at the University of Copenhagen with the aim of offering programmes in English as well as Danish skills for Danish and international students.

As mentioned, despite European recommendations aimed at promoting linguistic diversity in France, English has consolidated its position in many contexts where it seems to be promoted because of its strong 'social' demand,

26 'On aurait pu s'attendre à ce que les effets prévisibles d'un tel projet aient fait l'objet d'études préalables et d'évaluations par les autorités publiques compétentes. Or il n'en est rien.'

as described by Forlot (2016, p. 110). The different functions and the various statuses that language occupies in education and in several domains of daily life enable different perspectives on language and allow us to recognize what is taken for granted or where firmly held reluctance lies. Depending on the circumstances, each individual can assess and use a language completely differently. Language policies will have to take this into account in one way or another. How they do that is a political matter. Regarding this political issue, Matthey and Fibbi contend (2010, p. 3): 'The political dimension is naturally dependent on economic and social dynamics so that the status of languages is not defined by force [...] but in a more subtle way, through the power and prestige to which mastery of languages gives access.'²⁷ Thus, the use of English in various domains in France is due not only to the linguistic and economic hegemony of the language but also to language ideologies.

In many domains, English is a language that is taken for granted and this is not without effects. The more the presence of English increases, the less this presence seems to be questioned. To put it another way, the less Englishization is questioned, the more the status of English as 'different' from other languages seems to be implicitly reinforced. In certain domains, the very large place given to English must be considered as a form of 'submission'. The submission is due to the assumption that the Englishization of higher education is indispensable without examining precisely to what extent this meets the different needs of the various stakeholders. This might have been resulted in a divergence between the extent to which English has gained ground and the real need for it. The use of English has consolidated in scientific domains, leading to domain loss of languages with which scientists have previously communicated. In public opinion, the majority is convinced that English should be the language of instruction in educational domains. Due to globalization and the economic power of the United States in particular, English has also occupied a dominant position in economic domains. Finally, English is very present in media domains. However, in all these domains the question can be raised whether it is more closely linked to its status than to real necessities (see also Chaplier, 2014).

In the aforementioned domains, language ideologies often take away from reality, which is more characterized by hybrids, code-switching, and code-mixing than by clearly separate and distinguishable language systems. Based on ideology theory (Althusser, 1970; Larrain, 1979), a language ideology can

27 'La dimension politique est naturellement tributaire des dynamiques économiques et sociales de sorte que le statut des langues ne se définit pas par la force [...] mais de manière plus subtile, par le biais du pouvoir et du prestige auxquels la maîtrise des langues donne accès.'

be defined as a system of (illusory) beliefs about how language functions in a specific domain. Previously it was pointed out that the language ideologies of the proponents and opponents of the Fioraso Law are not evidence-based. Whatever the views expressed in the public debate, they were not based on solid scientific research into the Englishization of higher education in France. Yet the opponents very confidently asserted that Englishization leads to domain loss for the French language and the loss of France's power in the world. With the same confidence, the proponents claimed that EMI would benefit the French language and culture as international students learn to master them when they study in France and then venture out into the world. Blattès (2018, p. 24) delicately points out the following: 'Most researchers who have focused on France have studied attitudes towards English rather than EMI per se.' All in all, this produces an ambivalent picture of the Englishization of higher education in France.

However different the perspectives of the proponents and opponents of the Fioraso Law are, they have one thing in common: they are blind to translingual practices in France. Both assume two language systems (French and English) between which a bilingual individual moves, but do not see that in practice such a person actually appropriates and deploys features from both language systems in order to communicate. Integrating features from two or more language systems is called translanguaging (Vogel & García, 2017). Williams coined the concept of translanguaging (in the original Welsh: *trawsieithu*) to refer to bilingual practices characterized by 'the planned and systematic use of two languages for teaching and learning inside the same lesson' (Lewis et al., 2012, p. 643). For example, writing in Welsh and reading in English. Beyond the idea that the language repertoire of an individual consists of two separate domains in the brain that correspond to different language systems, Cummins, based on research into bilingual classrooms (French/English) in Montreal, used the iceberg metaphor to describe the interaction between language systems. That part of the iceberg that rises above the water surface suggests that a bilingual speaker speaks two different languages, but below the water surface there is a 'common underlying proficiency', that is, an amalgam of features of both language systems (Cummins, 1979). According to Wei (2018, p. 24), translanguaging 'challenges the conventional understanding of language boundaries between [...] culturally and politically labelled languages.'

The Englishization of higher education in France implies the creation of spatio-temporal contexts in which students are involved in translanguaging. The translingual practices in higher education are at odds with the ultimately monolingual perspectives of the proponents and opponents of the Fioraso

Law, which are based on the idea that efficient communication is only possible in a common language, French or English. As English-speaking monolingualism spreads and proliferates, it is important to bear in mind that, contrary to what is widely believed – by politicians and the general public – monolingualism is not the norm in our globalized societies: it is the exception. The development of plurilingual education via translingual practices could curb the instrumentalization of English as a factor of internationalization. A conference on 'Plurilingualism, pluriculturalism and English in globalization: Devices, practices and issues of internationalization in European higher education' held in Angers in October 2015, is illustrative of translanguaging. It aimed to explore various avenues that demonstrate internationalization policies where English is not the ubiquitous lingua franca. Of the many examples presented, the experience of a Franco-Italian master's degree (Brancaglioni, 2018) designed between the Università degli Studi di Milano and the University of Avignon and the Pays de Vaucluse testifies to the possibility of creating international courses which allow the national languages to be maintained, especially when it is a question of closely related languages. Similarly, Muñoz and Vieira (2018) report the case of the Universidade Federal da Integração Latino-Americana (UNILA, the Federal University for Latin American Integration) in Brazil which in 2010 received its first intake of students from different countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. As Muñoz and Vieira underline, this project, both political and educational, aimed to promote simultaneously integration through bilingualism (Spanish and Portuguese), interdisciplinarity and multiculturalism. Moreover, Forlot (2016) has developed the idea whereby English can be seen as a stabilizer or even as a 'booster' of plurilingualism, an idea which consists in 'departitioning language teaching' and considering the role of English within it, so that it can function as a 'bridge language' between French and Chinese for example (pp. 103-105).

6 Conclusion

In the case of the Englishization of higher education in France official discourses and actual practices diverge. Illustrative of this, as mentioned, is the gap between what the Toubon Law prescribes and the increase in universities offering EMI programmes. The introduction of the Fioraso Law was intended to close this gap, but it sparked a public debate between proponents and opponents who each maintained their own perspective. However, the proponents and opponents have one thing in common, namely

that they assume that languages are separate and distinguishable. They have an overly static and monolingual image of language that does not do justice to the translanguaging practices in higher education in France. These dynamic practices are characterized by hybrids, code-switching, and code-mixing. Although the Englishization of higher education in France is the result of the global commodification of education and research, translanguaging practices may provide the breeding ground for resistance to the underlying neoliberalism. Even if a kind of globalized English does function as the 'lingua franca' in many academic domains on higher education in France, cases of 'translanguaging' abound. A policy that valorizes plurilingualism, a true parameter of differentiation, would be much more interesting than a policy of blindly chasing Englishization. To achieve real inclusion in times of globalization, it is necessary to design language policies in higher education that would combine the challenge of the centrality of English with that of linguistic plurality. Such language policies would offer attractive paths that differ from those of Anglophone universities.

References

- Aizawa, I., & McKinley, J. (2020). EMI challenges in Japan's internationalization of higher education. In H. Bowles & A.C. Murphy (Eds.), *English-medium instruction and the internationalization of universities* (pp. 27-48). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Althusser, L. (1970). *Idéologie et appareils idéologiques d'État*. (Notes pour une recherche). *La Pensée*, 151.
- Beacco, J.-C., & Messin, K. C. (2010). Les politiques linguistiques européenne et la gestion de la diversité des langues en France. *Langue Française*, 167, 95-111.
- Blanchet, P., Breton, R., & Schiffman, H. (Eds.) (1999). *Les langues régionales de France: un état des lieux à la veille du XXI^e siècle/The regional languages of France, an inventory on the eve of the XXIst century*. Peeters.
- Blattès, M. (2018). English-medium instruction in French higher education: Competing ideologies, policies and practices [Thesis]. King's College London. Retrieved 10 November 2020 from https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/files/104629103/2018_Blatt_s_Marianne_1171954_thesis.pdf
- Bourdieu, P., de Swaan, A., Hagège, C., Fumaroli, M., & Wallerstein, I. (2001). Quelles langues pour une Europe démocratique? *Raisons politiques*, 2, 41-64.
- Brancaglion, C. (2018). Internationalisation des études: l'expérience du master franco-italien 'Langues, Littératures, Traduction et Culture'. *Heteroglossia*, 16, 125-142.
- Cabau, B. (2014). Échos nordiques: l'anglais dans l'enseignement supérieur en Suède. *Les langues modernes*, 1, 60-66

- Chaplier, C. (2014). Réflexion sur les enjeux et les conséquences de l'utilisation de l'anglais international. *Educação, Sociedad & Culturas*, 41, 25-45.
- Coleman, J. A. (2006). English-medium teaching in European higher education. *Language Teaching*, 39(1), 1-14.
- Conseil régional de Bretagne (2013). *Schéma régional de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche en Bretagne, rapport adopté*. www.europe.bzh/upload/docs/application/pdf/2013-11/sresr_version_finale.pdf
- Cummins, J. (1979). Linguistic interdependence and the educational development of bilingual children. *Review of Educational Research*, 49(2), 222-251.
- Deneire, M. (2015). Images of English in the French press. In A. Linn, N. Bermel, & G. Ferguson (eds.), *Attitudes Towards English in Europe: English in Europe* (pp. 55-70). De Gruyter Mouton.
- DGLFLF (2013). *Rapport au parlement sur l'emploi de la langue française*. Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication.
- Estival, D., & Pennycook, A. (2011). L'Académie française and Anglophone language ideologies. *Language Policy*, 10(4), 325-341.
- Ethnologue: Languages of the World* (2021). Retrieved 5 March 2021 from www.ethnologue.com
- European Commission (2012). Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. *Official Journal of the European Union*, C326/47.
- European Commission (2017). Key data on teaching languages at school in Europe (2017 edition). Retrieved 18 October 2020 from op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/3b929832-3f61-11e7-a08e-01aa75ed71a1
- Flaitz, J. (1988). *The ideology of English: French perceptions of English as a world language*. Mouton de Gruyter.
- Forlot, G. (2016). English in the educational expanding circle: Power, pride, and prejudice. In F. Le Lièvre, M. Anquetil, M. Dérivry-Plard, C. Fäcke, & L. Verstraete-Hansen (Eds.), *Langues et cultures dans l'internationalisation de l'enseignement supérieur au XXI^e siècle* (pp. 91-111). Peter Lang.
- France Culture (2018). L'université en anglais: soft power ou menace pour le français? Retrieved 18 October 2020 from www.franceculture.fr/emissions/hashtag/luniversite-en-anglais-soft-power-ou-menace-pour-le-francais
- Gazzola, M., & Grin, F. (2013). Is ELF more effective and fairer than translation? An evaluation of the EU's multilingual regime. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 23(1), 93-107.
- Giroux, H. A. (2014). *Neoliberalism's war on higher education*. Haymarket Books.
- Gonzague, A. (2013). Fioraso: 'Je vois beaucoup d'hypocrisie dans ce débat.' *Nouvel Observateur* (30 April). Retrieved 10 November 2020 from www.nouvelobs.com/education/20130430.OBS7733/fioraso-je-vois-beaucoup-d-hypocrisie-dans-ce-debat.html

- Gordon, D. C. (1978). *The French language and national identity (1930-1975)*. Mouton de Gruyter.
- Gouvernement (n.d.). Le Programme d'investissements d'avenir. Retrieved 5 January 2021 from www.gouvernement.fr/le-programme-d-investissements-d-avenir
- Héran, F. (2013). L'anglais hors la loi? Enquête sur les langues de recherche et d'enseignement en France. *Populations et Sociétés*, 501, 1-4.
- HRK, German Rectors' Conference. (2011). *Language Policy at German Universities*, Resolution of the 11th General Meeting of 22 November 2011.
- Journal Officiel de la République Française. (1994). Loi no. 94-665 du 4 août 1994 relative à l'emploi de la langue française.
- Journal Officiel de la République Française. (2020). Arrêté du 3 avril 2020 relatif à la certification en langue anglaise pour les candidats inscrits aux diplômes nationaux de licence, de licence professionnelle et au diplôme universitaire de technologie. Retrieved 10 December 2020 from www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000041782410/
- Lakehal, S. (2011). English hegemony and language diversity in the European Union. Problems and solutions. Stendhal University, Grenoble. Retrieved 5 March 2021 from www.academia.edu/2503834/ELF_and_EU
- Janvers, U., & Hultgren, A. K. (2018). The Englishization of European education. *European Journal of Language Policy*, 10(1), 1-11.
- Larrain, J. (1979). *The Concept of Ideology*. Hutchinson.
- Leclère, A. (1909). L'internationalisation de l'enseignement supérieur. *Revue Internationale de l'Enseignement*, 58, 427-437.
- Le Déaut, J.-Y. (2013). *Refonder l'université, dynamiser la recherche, mieux coopérer pour réussir*. Ministère de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche. Retrieved 18 October from www.vie-publique.fr/sites/default/files/rapport/pdf/134000040.pdf
- Le Lièvre, F. (2017). Quelles motivations et quelles conséquences au choix d'enseigner en anglais à l'université en France? In E. Suzuki, A. Potolia, & S. Cambrone-Lasnes (Eds.), *Penser la didactique du plurilinguisme et ses mutations: politiques, idéologies, dispositifs* (pp. 73-84). Presses Universitaires de Rennes.
- Le Lièvre, F., & Forlot, G. (2014). Éducation et plurilinguisme: quel rôle pour l'anglais? *Cahiers Internationaux de sociolinguistique*, 1(5), 161-117.
- Le Parisien (2019, June 16). Défense de la langue française: 100 signatures pour refuser la dictature dur tout-anglais. Retrieved 5 February 2021 from www.leparisien.fr/societe/defense-de-la-langue-francaise-100-signatures-pour-refuser-la-dictature-du-tout-anglais-16-06-2019-8094285.php
- Lewis, G., Jones, B., & Baker, C. (2012). Translanguaging: origins and development from school to street and beyond. *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 18(7), 641-654.

- Martins, C. B. (2019). L'enseignement supérieur à l'heure de la mondialisation. *Socio*, 12, 205-227.
- Matthey, M., & Fibbi, R. (2010). La transmission intergénérationnelle des langues minoritaires. *Revue Tranel (Travaux Neuchâtelois de linguistique)*, 52, 1-7.
- McPartland, B. (2013). Plan for degree courses in English is deluded. *The Local*. Retrieved 6 January 2021 from <http://www.thelocal.fr/20130417/university-english-french-werst>
- Munoz, A. E., & Vieira, C. (2018). Le plurilinguisme dans le cadre académique et de mobilité MERCOSUR: le cas de l'Université Fédérale d'Intégration Latino-Américaine. *Heteroglossia*, 16, 143-160.
- OECD (1996). L'économie fondée sur le savoir. [The knowledge-based economy]. Paris. Retrieved 10 January 2021 from www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=OCDE/GD%2896%29102&docLanguage=Fr
- Pech, M.-E. (2013, 13 March). L'université française veut créer des diplômes en anglais. *Le Figaro*. Retrieved 18 October 2020 from etudiant.lefigaro.fr/les-news/actu/detail/article/l-universite-francaise-veut-creer-des-diplomes-en-anglais-1420/
- République Française. (2013). Loi n° 2013-660 du 22 juillet 2013 relative à l'enseignement supérieur et à la recherche. Retrieved 18 October 2020 from www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/JORFTEXT000027735009/
- Sabaté-Dalmau, M. (2020). Neoliberal language policies and linguistic entrepreneurship in higher education: Lecturers' perspectives. *Language, Culture and Society*, 2(2), 174-196.
- Salomone, R. (2016). The rise of global English: Challenges for English-medium instruction and language rights. In F. Le Lièvre, M. Anquetil, M. Derivry-Plard, C. Fäcke, & L. Verstraete-Hansen (Eds.), *Langues et cultures dans l'internationalisation de l'enseignement supérieur au XXIe siècle: (Re)penser linguistiques: anglais et plurilinguisme* (pp. 59-90). Peter Lang.
- Sénat (2017). Rapport d'information n° 90 (2017-2018) de MM. Robert del Picchia et André Vallini sur le contrat d'objectifs de Campus France, déposé le 15 novembre 2017. Retrieved 18 October 2020 from www.senat.fr/rap/r17-090/r17-0901.pdf
- Slovenian Presidency of the EU. (2008). Informal meeting of the Ministers for Competitiveness (Research). Brdo 15 April 2008. Draft summary by the Presidency. Retrieved 10 December 2020 from <http://www.eu2008.si/>
- Soulé, V. (2013). L'anglais enflamme les amphis. *Libération* (20 May). Retrieved 6 January 2021 from www.liberation.fr/societe/2013/05/20/l-anglais-enflamme-les-amphis_904358/
- Truchot, C. (2013). Enseigner en anglais dans les universités françaises: quels effets prévisibles? *Education et Sociétés Plurilingues*, 35, 87-90.
- Truchot, C. (2016). Internationalisation, anglicisation et politiques publiques de l'enseignement supérieur. In F. Le Lièvre, M. Anquetil, M. Derivry-Plard, C. Fäcke,

- & L. Verstraete-Hansen (Eds.), *Langues et cultures dans l'internationalisation de l'enseignement supérieur au XXI^e siècle. (Re)penser les politiques linguistiques: anglais et plurilinguisme* (pp. 427-437). Peter Lang.
- Usunier, J.-C. (2010). Un plurilinguisme pragmatique face au mythe de l'anglais *lingua franca* de l'enseignement supérieur. In A.-Cl. Berthoud (Ed.), *Les enjeux du plurilinguisme pour la construction et la circulation des savoirs* (pp. 37-48). Éditions ASSH.
- Viaut, A. (2020). De 'langue régionale' à 'langue de France' ou les ombres du territoire. *Glottopol*, 34, 46-56.
- Vogel, S., & García, O. (2017). Translanguaging. In G. Noblit & L. Moll (Eds.), *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*. Oxford University Press. DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.181
- Wei, L. (2018). Linguistic (super) diversity, post-lingualism and translanguaging moments. In A. Creese and A. Blackledge (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Superdiversity* (pp. 16-29). Routledge.
- Wright, S. (2006). French as a lingua franca. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 26, 35-60.

About the author

FRANÇOISE LE LIÈVRE is Assistant Professor in Language Sciences, focusing on language policy issues in higher education. She is currently in charge of Francophonie at the University of Galatasaray (Istanbul). She is general secretary of Poclande (People, Cultures, Languages and Development), an international network of researchers, experts and practitioners on development issues.