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### **Bilingual French Initiatives in Public Schools: A New York Story: New Opportunities, Diversity and Shared History and Values**

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BILINGUAL FRENCH INITIATIVES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS: A NEW YORK STORY  
New opportunities, diversity and shared history and values

by

CLAIRE ARNOD HORIKAWA

A master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York  
2016

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the  
Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies satisfying the thesis  
Requirement for the degree of Master of Arts

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

BILINGUAL FRENCH INITIATIVES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS: A NEW YORK STORY  
New opportunities, diversity and shared history and values

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New York ! je dis New York, laisse affluer le sang noir dans ton sang  
Qu'il dérouille tes articulations d'acier, comme une huile de vie  
Qu'il donne à tes ponts la courbe des croupes et la souplesse des lianes.  
Voici revenir les temps très anciens, l'unité retrouvée la réconciliation du Lion du Taureau et de  
l'Arbre.  
L'idée liée à l'acte l'oreille au cœur le signe au sens.  
Voilà tes fleuves bruissant de caïmans musqués et de lamantins aux yeux de mirages. Et nul  
besoin d'inventer les Sirènes.  
Mais il suffit d'ouvrir les yeux à l'arc-en-ciel d'Avril  
Et les oreilles, surtout les oreilles à Dieu qui d'un rire de saxophone créa le ciel et la terre en six  
jours.  
Et le septième jour, il dormit du grand sommeil nègre.

Léopold Sedar Senghor  
1956

New York! I say New York, let black blood flow into your blood.  
Let it wash the rust from your steel joints, like an oil of life  
Let it give your bridges the curve of hips and supple vines.  
Now the ancient age returns, unity is restored,  
The reconciliation of the Lion and Bull and Tree  
Idea links to action, the ear to the heart, sign to meaning.  
See your rivers stirring with musk alligators  
And sea cows with mirage eyes. No need to invent the Sirens.  
Just open your eyes to the April rainbow  
And your eyes, especially your ears, to God  
Who in one burst of saxophone laughter  
Created heaven and earth in six days,  
And on the seventh slept a deep Negro sleep.

(Translated by Melvin Dixon)

## **Introduction**

In September 2013, I started the MALS program at the CUNY Graduate Center. My track was Urban Education but embracing the interdisciplinary nature of the program, I took classes in French literature and philosophy as well as Linguistics. Having moved to the United States, and more specifically to New York, a few years earlier, the Urban Education classes allowed me to reflect on many American issues such as race relations, immigration and achievement gaps through the lens of education and transpose those reflections to my own country, France. Being an educator, I was also experiencing these different issues on a daily basis, within the setting of my school. Being in New York City, I was learning how the city's responses to these issues, if not always successful, were multifaceted, innovative, democratic and embraced diversity. As the WNYC radio sign-off goes: "This is New York, a city of opportunity where nearly 8 million people live in peace and harmony and enjoy the benefits of democracy."

In parallel to my own reflection, a quiet "bilingual revolution" was taking place in New York City. The New York City public school system was starting to offer several French bilingual educational options: French dual language classes, French Heritage classes and a French-American charter school. First, these settings are usually associated with independent



schools. But something inherent to the system, was allowing these initiatives to emerge in the public sector. Secondly, French has been considered a language in decline compared to languages like Spanish, Mandarin Chinese or Arabic, which growth has been fueled by economics and politics. Was French in New York, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, still important? Thirdly, French has also been considered an elitist language, learned and spoken by the upper class. Why would the New York City public schools offer different opportunities and quasi-private settings for a so-called elitist and passé language? The reflective processes I was engaged in, while studying Brown vs Board of Education in one class, the philosophy of Descartes in another and second language acquisition in a third, helped me explore these questions, going beyond common pre-conceived ideas. A multifaceted French bilingual revolution narrative was starting to take shape. It is a story of new opportunities, diversity and shared history and values. It is a New York story.

There has always been private French American bilingual initiatives in New York such as the well-known Lycée Français. Where the options were once few in numbers and limited to those who could pay, public options have now been added. The French Heritage Language program served around 250 students in 2015 (numbers vary from year to year) in New York City, in 10 public high schools and in community centers like the Malian Cultural Center in Harlem. Another major initiative is the French dual language classes. The French dual language

classes are comprised of students coming from Francophone<sup>1</sup> countries and American students.

As of September 2015, the following schools have a French dual language classes program: PS

20 The Clinton Hill School Brooklyn, PS 58 The Carroll School Brooklyn, PS 84 The Lilian

Weber School, PS110 The Monitor School Brooklyn, PS 133 The William A Butler School,

PS/IS 76 The A. Phillips Randolph School, PS 3 The Bedford Village School, MS 51 The

William Alexander School, MS256 Academic and Athletic Excellence School, MS 88 Peter

Rouget, the School for International Studies and The New York French American Charter

School.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Merriam Webster dictionary definition, Francophone is: having, or belonging to a population using French as its first or sometimes second language.

## **1. Why French in New York?**

### **Preparing Children for a Global Economy**

When opening a French dual language class, a parent coalition between Francophone and non-Francophone parents is necessary, in order to fulfill the student number requirements. Non-Francophone parents are motivated to provide their children with a global education for a world where the economies and the fates of all countries are now closely interlinked. This motivation is particularly evident in New York City with its long tradition of welcoming immigrants from all over the world and where around 180 languages are spoken. The public and private education sectors have to specifically cater to this demand. An example is the new private school Avenues<sup>2</sup>, the “world school” that opened in 2012 with a strong language program and the possibility to study in different countries. As some New York parents expect the quality of private education within the setting of public education, there is a parallel push for dual language classes in public schools. In the article “The Bilingual Advantage” in *School Stories* about dual language classes, the following parent explains:

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<sup>2</sup><http://www.avenues.org/>

Herron-Lisbon believes the second language will provide her children future opportunities for a career in a global economy and for travel. “The world is going to get smaller,” she said. “I’ve always felt that a second language from early on is going to give my kids a huge advantage.

But why do these parents choose French as a global language? “I think that many parents that are looking at the future of their children within the global economy realize that many countries around the world do speak French and that a lot of business is conducted in French,” says Robin Sundick, Principal at PS 84, a school with French dual language classes, told FRANCE 24, a news and current affairs agency based in Paris, in the feature “ When French school is free\_and fought over”. The reality of the Francophone world as it exists on the streets of New York City with people from France, West Africa, Maghreb, and the Caribbean also reach non-Francophone parents.

### **A special relationship to French**

When analyzing the parent’s choice for the French language in public or private settings, there seems also to be a special attachment to the French language, which has little to do with the global economy. In the *New Republic*, in February 2014, linguist John McWorther wrote the feature “Let’s stop pretending that French is an important language” and made the point that Spanish and Chinese are now more useful.

But de Voldère, a parent who was instrumental in creating the dual language program in PS84 and founded La Petite École<sup>3</sup>, a Francophone pre-school explains to FRANCE 24:

Many of the parents whose children attend La Petite École – paying up to \$22,000 a year for a guaranteed head start in French – have no link to the country, and speak to their children in their own various mother tongues: English, Spanish, Mandarin, Hebrew... But they have one thing in common: They are Francophiles. There is real affection for the country and the language.

The relationship to the French language often expresses itself in terms of emotions and feelings. For example, the Francophonie presents itself first and foremost as the group of countries, who have “le français en partage”, who share French (the English translation can’t fully express the emotional content of “en partage”. “Le désir de français” is also an expression often used about the French language in the world. I have not heard expressions like “the desire for English” or “the desire for Spanish”.

FRANCE 24 commented on this affective bond, particularly in New York City:

That affection runs deep and wide in New York. Less than one percent of the city speaks French at home, but the language remains disproportionately popular, even revered. It’s also perceived to be regaining its competitive edge (alongside Spanish, Mandarin and Arabic), long after losing its title as lingua franca to English.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.lpeny.com/>

There is a special bond between New York and France and especially between the two cities of New York and Paris, two cultural strongholds who have been welcoming artists and thinkers from all over the world. The many reactions of support in New York after the Paris terrorist's attacks of November 2015 were proof of this relationship. Literature can guide us in understanding this unique affection towards Paris, France and the French language as many American writers and artists have expressed these ideas. In his book *Americans in Paris*, which is a selection of texts about Paris written by Americans from Benjamin Franklin to James Baldwin, Adam Gopnik writes in his introduction:

From the earliest years of the American republic, Paris has provoked an extraordinary American literary response. An almost inevitable destination for writers and thinkers, Paris has been many things to many Americans: a tradition-bound bastion of the old world of Europe; a hotbed of revolutionary ideologies in politics and art; and a space in which to cultivate an openness to life and love thought impossible at home.

France possesses indeed this duality of both traditional and revolutionary, elitist and universal ideas as Mona Ozouf notes in her book *Jules Ferry<sup>4</sup>: La liberté et la tradition*: “The problem with France is that there are two: within her coexist an aristocratic nation and a democratic

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<sup>4</sup> Jules Ferry is a French statesman famous for promoting a free, mandatory, and with no religion primary education in 1882

nation; a conservative country and a revolutionary country; one almost numb, the other one highly explosive. That was well the feeling of Jules Ferry”<sup>5</sup>

These perceptions sprung from historical events that shaped France. It is therefore important to look at the history of France to go beyond stereotypes. Going beyond stereotypes helps to understand the origin of the different values that the French language carries and promotes and that are still alive today in the minds of Francophones and non-Francophones alike. The Lycée Français of New York, when holding its first French-speaking cultural fair in April 2016 “Le Français oui but why?” will be investigating the importance of these values behind the choice of French as second language:

When parents decide that their children should learn the French language, adding bilingualism to their skills, they not only select a language but also a culture. A language is more than words; it is also a way of thinking and seeing the world. French, the language of Descartes and the Philosophers of the Enlightenment is also the common language of Francophone countries. It carries certain values, and possibly suggests a different approach to the world.

Here in New York, these values are perceived through the lens of American history and through the lens, for immigrants, of their country of origin. One of the largest immigrant groups to New

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<sup>5</sup> « La difficulté avec la France, c’est qu’il y en a deux: en elle coexistent une nation aristocratique et une nation démocratique ; un pays conservateur et un pays révolutionnaire ; l’un presque engourdi, l’autre éminemment inflammable. Tel était bien le sentiment de Jules Ferry ». (Personal translation).

York comes from South America where, in most countries, French is very strong. This impacts the citywide perception.

## **The History of the French Language**

### ***French: The Language of the King and the Court***

French became the official language of France by a King's decree, the Ordinance of Villers-Cotterêt, under the reign of François I of France, in 1539. In his article, "Et François Ier imposa une langue officielle", in *L'Histoire* Joël Cornette writes :

In 1539, by the Ordinance of Villers-Cotterêts, François 1st rules French instead of Latin as the official language in all legal and administrative actions. It thus gives a decisive impulse to a language that is already the one of the court and the city . Humanists and poets will complete his victory.<sup>6</sup>(40)

For the King, imposing French was clearly marking the difference between his power and the power of the Church that used Latin. For the King, the temporal power here and now, for the Church the spiritual power in the Hereafter. This decree infused the language with specific values that would endure in the following centuries. The distinction between a language for the Church on one hand and French on the other, begun to promote the idea of rationality and, its use for official documents, the idea of clarity, often associated with it. As the language of the King, it promoted, first and foremost, the idea of refinement. Joël Cornette adds: « didn't the refined

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<sup>6</sup> « En 1539, par l'ordonnance de Villers-Cotterêts, François Ier impose la pratique du français à la place du latin dans tous les actes juridiques et administratifs. Il donne ainsi une impulsion décisive à une langue qui est déjà celle de la cour et de la ville. Les humanistes et les poètes parachèveront sa victoire ». (Personal translation)



language of the court impose its standards, gradually to the whole of society? Ronsard in *Franciade* (1574) argues that "of all dialects, the courtier is the most beautiful one because of the majesty of the Prince"<sup>7</sup>(44). These urbane and refined qualities will prove extremely appealing and robust. John McWorther identified in his article, the learning of French as a class marker and there is no denial that from the beginning, the French language embodied a desire for upward mobility within France itself. The editors of "La Langue et la Nation" in *L'Histoire* note that despite the intervention of the state, both under Francois I and later with Jules Ferry: "It would be wrong to believe that the State, even highly centralized, has a total control on language. The choice of French and its universalization in the provinces and departments also depend on individuals, from the writers to the poorest inhabitants".<sup>8</sup> Indeed at the time of Villers Coterêt, there were particular reasons why French was chosen by some (admittedly a minority) within France. By being the language of the Court, the French language channeled all the characteristics of this specific environment: refinement, art de vivre, luxury and so called civilization in comparison with rural France which spoke many different patois. "How to explain the victory of French, regardless of the action of the King's men ..... First there was undoubtedly the desire of the notables to distinguish themselves from the people by speaking French the language of

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<sup>7</sup> «Le langage châtié de la cour n'aurait-il pas imposé ses normes, progressivement à l'ensemble de la société? Ronsard dans la *Franciade* (1574) soutient que « de tous les dialectes, le courtisan est le plus beau a cause de la majesté du Prince ». (Personal translation)

<sup>8</sup> « Il serait faux cependant de croire que l'Etat, fut-il centralisé, dispose des langues à sa guise. Le choix du français et son universalisation dans les provinces et les départements dépendent aussi des particuliers, des écrivains comme des habitants les plus modestes ». (Personal translation)

administration and culture”<sup>9</sup> (Cornette). The association of the language with the Court and the importance of the Court remained extremely important in the following centuries. French started to spread in the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the rest of Europe and to be spoken by the aristocrats, the bourgeois, the artists and the intellectuals. The elitist and intellectual value of French given by its status, as the language of the French royal Court was self-perpetuating as it became the language of the European elites and later in some extent the Gilded age families this side of the Atlantic. Hence, the strong social marker identified by McWorther. But why did French spread to the rest of Europe? Why did it become an intimate language for people who were not even born French?

### ***French: the Language of the Arts and the Art of Conversation***

In his article *Quand toute l'Europe parlait français* Jean Marie Goulemot speaking about this expansion in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century explains: “The prestige of the French language is indebted to the classicism and harmony of Versailles that everybody dreams to imitate”<sup>10</sup>. The Research Center of the Versailles palace in their introduction to the theme of their 2012-2013 research wrote: “Les étrangers à la cour de France au temps des Bourbons (1594-1789). Stratégies, apports, suspicions” investigated how the court became the place of a collective affirmation - that of the "imagined community" of French. The court built a representation of

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<sup>9</sup> « Comment expliquer cette victoire du français, indépendamment de l'action des hommes du roi.....il y eut d'abord incontestablement le désir des notables de se distinguer du peuple en parlant le français la langue de l'administration et de la culture ». (Personal translation)

<sup>10</sup> « Le prestige de la langue française tient alors à cette grande ombre portée du classicisme et à l'harmonie de Versailles qu'on rêve d'imiter ». (Personal translation)

identity, identity subsequently staged through the palace's rooms, entertainment, and the practices of its government.<sup>11</sup>

In *When the world spoke French*, Marc Fumaroli further analyzes how Louis XIV had been politically successful in transforming the French nobility from a nobility of arms into a nobility of arts. For the internal peace of the kingdom, the soldiers had become the patrons of the arts. Craftsmen with the virtual seal of approval of the French nobility were welcome everywhere in Europe and even in America where a Frenchman Pierre l'Enfant would design the plan of the new capital Washington D.C. The reputation and the tradition for best craftsmanship and luxury goods, a legacy of French political history, continues to live on through French companies like Louis Vuitton or Hermès and pervades the French language. It also fuels stereotypes. In the film *High Society*, Frank Sinatra and Bing Crosby mock the "high society" by singing a nonsensical string of French words in the song "well did you evah?" from Camembert to Champagne.

Compared to the English nobility who was more concerned with commerce, French nobles were the patrons of literature, science and philosophy. The ideals of Honnête Homme

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<sup>11</sup> Il s'agit aussi d'observer comment la cour devient le lieu d'une affirmation collective-celle de la "communauté imaginée" des Français-qui pour s'affirmer comme telle, construit une certaine représentation de son identité qu'elle met en scène à travers ses décors, ses divertissements, mais aussi les pratiques de gouvernement. (Personal translation)

and Honnête Femme, people who live honorable and civilized lives of intellectual curiosity was developed at the time and contributed to the idea of French being the language of civilization and culture. The French nobility participated in salons and practiced the famed art of conversation. Conversation was, in reality, much more substantive, as salons were forums attended by nobles and commoners alike where ideas were shared in a civilized manner (the word “civilized” referring to a social behaviour different from the brutality of the previous centuries, especially the fratricide wars of religion). As Marc Fumaroli writes in *When the World spoke French*: “elegance, politesse and a new softness of manners seemed to prefigure a world in which each man’s freedom could accommodate the equality of all, and in which the vivacity of private passions would not disturb the joys of communal life”(xxii). These forums were enabling thinkers to thrive and to conquer Europe, as was the case with Voltaire. The French language was synonymous with culture and civilization. The association of the French language with art and ideas was also reinforced by the role of Paris at this time. Goulemot writes: “Yet more than the grandiose Versailles, it is Paris and its burgeoning social life that fascinates the rest of the continent... all Europe aspires to be a vast Parisian office of wit and spirit”<sup>12</sup>(47). Marc Fumaroli explains “Eighteenth-century France and its language were quite simply contagious and irresistible

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<sup>12</sup> « Pourtant, plus que le Versailles grandiose, c’est Paris et sa vie mondaine foisonnante qui passionnent le reste du continent... L’Europe tout entière n’aspire à n’être qu’un vaste « bureau d’esprit » parisien ». (Personal translation)

because their image was that of the small amount of happiness and intelligence of which men are capable during their brief passage through this earthly vale of tears”( xxvii).

Not only was France sending craftsmen and artists all over Europe but Paris was also welcoming artists from all over Europe and later from the rest of the world. It continued to do so even when other cities like New York were starting to become prominent. Paris became a transnational and universal place, an artist’s haven, and the moveable feast of Hemingway that still infuses the French language. The association of French with art reinforces at times its stereotype of elitism and excellence.

### ***French: the Language of Clarity and Rationality***

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the French language became more codified, with the creation of l’Académie française in 1635 which helped confirm the French language’s reputation for clarity and rationality. Philosophers endorsed the language: “The philosophers eventually granted it a fundamental role in the evolution of habits and morals and the advent of what we will call civilization”<sup>13</sup>. This desire to create a clear and codified language in harmony with a social and political order, promoted a few decades later its use of French in Europe”<sup>14</sup>(Goulemot 48). In 1742, Frederic II of Prussia declared that the Académie of Berlin should use French as its main

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<sup>13</sup> « Les philosophes finissent par lui reconnaître un rôle fondamental dans l’évolution des mœurs et l’avènement de ce que l’on va appeler la civilisation ». (Personal translation)

<sup>14</sup> « Cette volonté de créer une langue claire codifiée, en harmonie avec un ordre social et politique, favorisera quelques décennies plus tard l’usage européen du français ». (Personal translation)

language. In 1782, this same Académie proposed a competition on the French language. Its topic: why is French the most universal of all European languages? This infatuation for French came to a ridiculous peak, when “people believed that even the use of French alone gives them spirit and makes them philosophers”<sup>15</sup>(Goulemot 47).

But French was not solely considered as a second and philosophical language but was for many who spoke it an intimate language, perfectly mastered. History tells us that when at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, writer Prosper Mérimée gave his famous dictation at the Imperial court of Napoleon III, the Emperor made 73 mistakes, the Empress 62, the author Alexandre Dumas’ son, 24. The person who made only 3 mistakes was Prince of Metternich, an Austrian.

### ***French: the Language of the Huguenots***

A major event helped the spread of French to the rest of Europe: The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. The Edict of Nantes in 1598 had granted the French Protestants, or Huguenots the right to practice their religion without persecution of the state. Louis XIV revoked it, closed Protestant churches and schools, and initiated a dramatic brain drain. As Goulemot writes:

The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes launched a few hundred thousand French to Holland, Switzerland, Prussia and England ...there were intellectuals ...To survive they will have a career in teaching but even

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<sup>15</sup> « On en vient même à croire que l’usage du français à lui seul, donne de l’esprit et vous fait philosophe ». (Personal translation)

more so in journalism. From the Provinces -Unies they launched hundreds of newspapers in French that are were in all capitals "<sup>16</sup>(48).

(Hugenots also migrated to America via England and Holland and became prominent members of society: the Dupont family and John Jay's father here in New York as well as President's Roosevelt mother's family, the Delanos.)

### ***French: the Language of Humanism***

Another value that French is often associated with, and which stems from the time of its official implementation, is Humanism. Francois I promulgated his decree in the 16th century, during the golden age of Renaissance humanism. Timothy Hampton in "Humanist models for Thought and Action" in *A New History of French Literature* writes about Guillaume Budé, the French humanist who helped found the College de France and the Bibliothèque Nationale: "The salient feature of Budé humanism is its close connection with nascent French nationalism... promoting a national literature and nationalist politics"(139). Nationalism here has to be understood as nation building. Humanists thinkers like the poets of la Pléiade, and later displaced Huguenots like Pierre Bayle, by using French, helped advance the language, which came to be closely associated with the qualities of humanism: the agency of the human being and the importance of critical thinking. Humanism has been and remains a central theme for French

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<sup>16</sup> « La Révocation de l'édit de Nantes a lancé deux cent mille Français vers la Hollande, la Suisse, la Prusse et l'Angleterre...ce sont des « intellectuels...Pour survivre ils vont faire carrière dans l'enseignement mais plus encore dans le journalisme. A partir des Provinces –Unies ils lancent des centaines de journaux en français qui sont lus dans toutes les capitales ». (Personal translation)

thinkers from Du Bellay, Rabelais, Montaigne to Descartes, Montesquieu, Olympe de Gouge, Alexis de Tocqueville, Victor Hugo, Albert Camus and Antoine de St Éxupéry in the 20th century. They are joined by the philosophers and thinkers of the Enlightenment, heirs of Humanism: Voltaire, Diderot, Beaumarchais and d'Alembert.

### ***French: The Language of Human Rights***

In 1789 the French Revolution infused the French language with new values inspired by the Enlightenment: Libert , Egalit , Fraternit . “Come the Revolution, Europe soon recognized the idiom and rhetoric of regicide revolutionaries. It is the language of the soldiers launched in the name of freedom for the conquest of the continent”<sup>17</sup> (Goulemot 49). The language became the language of human rights as France voted the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen in 1789. This gave the language its reputation for universality as this declaration came to inspire many others. The legacy of this declaration came to be particularly important for the young United States. The declaration, inspired by the Enlightenment, had been introduced by General de Lafayette, one of the heroes of the American Revolution, to the French assembly, and directly influenced by Thomas Jefferson. France and America will continue to be a constant reminder of these ideals to each other. In *Democracy in America*, Alexandre De Toqueville looked in America for ideas on how to pursue the works of the French Revolution. During Segregation, black American artists were welcome in Paris. Under the Vichy regime,

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<sup>17</sup> « Survient la R volution...l'Europe y reconna t bient t l'idiome –et la rh torique des r volutionnaires r gicides. C'est la langue des soldats lanc s au nom de la libert    la conqu te du continent ». (Personal translation)



French artists and thinkers like Claude Levi-Strauss, Marcel Duchamp moved to America.

Antoine de St Exupéry wrote and published his famous book *The Little Prince* in New York City in 1943. Many American artists moved to Paris in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> as they found an atmosphere of creative and personal freedom. But the ideals that embody the French language are probably nowhere in America more present than in New York where the Statue of Liberty, standing in the harbor, symbol of the values of Freedom and Democracy, was a gift from France.

This is the legacy of history, the history of a language that carries within itself universal values linked to art and culture. But there is also the reality of contemporary New York. In the conference “Why French Matters” held at La Maison Française at Columbia University in April 2011, Souleymane Bachir Diagne stated : “French matters because Africa matters”. He was alluding to the Francophone world, which is well alive in New York. Here is the duality of the French language, which conveys contradictory ideas, traditional and revolutionary, elitist and universal.

## **2.The Francophonie**

### **The Francophonie in New York**

In New York public schools, students who are learning French in bilingual settings come from very different countries. As Garcia, Zakharia, Otcu comment “New York City provides the sociolinguistic context for linguistic and cultural contact among groups that never would have interacted in their countries of origin, or who have been in conflict” (15). Ties between an individual and the language are extremely powerful and deep and often go beyond the allegiance to one’s country. These ties allow for example different bilingual initiatives in Chinese to take place with people coming from all over Asia. But Fabrice Jaumont and Jane Ross write in their essay “New York’s French Bilingual Revolution”: “...European and Canadian expatriates in Manhattan and West Brooklyn, West Africans in Harlem and the Bronx, Haitians in East Queens and East Brooklyn and North Africans in West Queens. We argue that it is above all this diversity in national origins, race and socioeconomic status that make the French case unique” (233). The early aught have seen an influx of Francophone families from France and Western Africa, as well as a growing Haitian community, that constitutes “29% of the French dual language bilingual education programs and... half of those enrolled in the French Heritage

Language programs in New York City” write Barrière and Monereau-Merry in “Trilingualism of the Haitian Diaspora in New York City”(Garcia, Zakharia, Otcu 256).

The diversity of the French American bilingual initiatives reflects the membership of the OIF, the *Organization Internationale de la Francophonie*. This official organization of the Francophone countries has 57 member states and 23 observer states.

Many member states are countries from Western Africa and it therefore explains why the majority of the students in the French heritage program are recent immigrants from Western Africa as reported in the 2014-2015 Annual report for the Face Foundation. These classes had been first set up in 2005 in the network of International High Schools for older students, refugees from French speaking countries, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea and the Ivory Coast. These countries, like others from Western Africa, are former French colonies.

Another important proportion of the students is from Haiti. But why do these students decide to maintain their connection to the French language in a substantial way, as they are becoming American citizens, as for many, French is not their main home language. It is true that it gives them a sense of belonging to something familiar, a connection to their home or their previous school language as French is the language used in schools in many Western African countries.

On the program *Destination Francophonies* from French International TV, TV5, students from the Bronx explain their motivations for participating in the French Heritage Program. Ouyada Pacome Sango from Congo says “The French language will help me a lot because with this

opportunity to speak one more language than English, I can interact with different societies, nations and cultures and keep my bond with Africa”<sup>18</sup>. Bassiro Kaba explains “ Everytime, I meet potential employers, they are very excited to hear that I am bilingual, that I speak French”<sup>19</sup> and tells how his maintained French English bilingualism enabled him to differentiate himself when interviewing for a job at MOMA.

### **The History of Francophonie**

What are the special bonds between these students’ countries of origin and the French language? Again, it is important to look at the historical perspective as it impacts French bilingual initiatives in New York City schools. Why are these countries having French as an official language French? Why do these countries belong to the Francophonie and its official organization, the OIF<sup>20</sup>, l’Organisation internationale de la Francophonie? How was the OIF created? Is this an extension of colonialism? Is it a covert attempt by France, to retain control on its former colonies? In her book *La Francophonie*, in the collection *Idées Reçues* (Popular Beliefs), Claire Tréan a former and prominent journalist of French newspaper *Le Monde* and a specialist of the Francophone countries argues:

The accusation of neo-colonialism is based on a historical error. Indeed, it was not by France that was conceived the project to structure all the Francophone countries but by a group of personalities, many of

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<sup>18</sup> « La langue française va beaucoup m’aider, parce que avec cette opportunité de parler une langue de plus que l’anglais, je peux interagir avec différentes sociétés , cultures et nations...et garder le lien que j’ai avec l’Afrique »(Personal translation)

<sup>19</sup> « Chaque fois que je vais dans un interview de travail, quand je leur dis que je suis bilingue...que je parle français ils sont super excités » (Personal translation)

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.francophonie.org/Welcome-to-the-International.html>

whom had in common that they were precisely leaders of the movement of independence in the Fifties and Sixties. They were called Leopold Senghor, Habib Bourguiba, Hamani Diori and Norodom Sihanouk<sup>21</sup> (20)

Independence leaders Leopold Senghor in Senegal, Habib Bourguiba in Tunisia, Hamani Diori in Niger and Norodom Sihanouk in Cambodia had deliberately chosen French, the language of their former colonizers, as the official language of their newly independent countries and were instrumental in creating the Agency for Cultural and Technical Co-operation, what would evolve later into the OIF. One of the reasons is that keeping French, as an official language would give them a wider access to the international community. They desperately needed to establish economic ties with more economically developed countries to lift their own from poverty. One could argue that they could have chosen English to that effect. One must also recognize that these leaders, as part of the elite, had been educated in the French system.

These leaders had been shaped by French values, they claimed, in particular, its humanism, and wanted to build their independence on those values, even if realism won over idealism, often in some dramatic ways. The ill effects of French colonization and its ramifications, still today, should in no way be forgotten while we are studying the specific ties between these countries with the French language and its values.

### **Leopold Senghor, Advocate of the French language and Poet of *Métissage***

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<sup>21</sup>. « Le reproche de néo-colonialisme repose en outre sur un contresens historique. Ce n'est pas en effet par la France qu'a été conçu le projet de structurer l'ensemble des pays francophones mais par un groupe de personnalités dont beaucoup avaient en commun d'avoir été justement de grandes figures du mouvement des indépendances dans les années cinquante et soixante. Ils s'appelaient Léopold Senghor, Habib Bourguiba, Hamani Diori et Norodom Sihanouk. ». (Personal translation)

In a seminal text written in the French philosophical magazine *Esprit* in 1965, along with other independence leaders, Leopold Senghor details the reasons of his affection for the French language. It is a love declaration to Humanism, to the Universal: “Whether it's the law, literature, art or science, the seal of French génie keeps its focus on humankind and it always has ethics at its heart. Hence its universality that corrects its taste for individualism<sup>22</sup>”(841). Was it the fear of Africa being fragmented? Was it the dream of a federation of Africa? The connection to a language linked to universalism, the connection to the rest of the world thanks to the French language was paramount for Senghor. And, it was more the connection to the French language than the connection to France. The *Esprit* article is an extraordinary and surprising love declaration to the French language for its specific linguistic qualities, which according to Senghor are: the depth of its vocabulary with its multitude of registers, its precise syntax and its rich stylistic. It is at the same time a declaration of his love for the African languages because “We don't want to renounce our African languages...we want to express our essence of being cultural metis, of men (and women) of the twentieth century”<sup>23</sup> (844). Metis in that sense, means multicultural, multiracial, with a fused identity and not Indigenous North Americans of mixed race .

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<sup>22</sup> « Qu'il s'agisse du droit, de la littérature, de l'art, voire de la science, le sceau du génie français demeure ce souci de l'homme, il exprime toujours une morale. D'où son caractère d'universalité qui corrige son goût de l'individualisme ». (Personal translation)

<sup>23</sup> « Il n'est pas question de renier les langues africaines... il est question d'exprimer notre authenticité de métis culturels, d'hommes du XXe siècle ». (Personal translation)

As for communities speaking French creole like Haitians and Mauritians, there is also the need to recognize and promote French Creole next to French. As Bellegarde-Smith writes in *Vodou in Haitian Life and Culture: invisible powers*: “Both Haitian Creole and Vodou contribute to a distinct Haitian identity... They can both be thought to constitute creative symbolic and organized responses to oppression.”(Barriere, Monéreau-Merry 250)

French historian René Raymond said in 2002 during Senghor’s eulogy at the Académie Française “While studying our writers, Senghor became aware of belonging to a civilization different but not inferior. For him this difference was an asset. With the concept of negritude, he praised and defended “*metissage*”<sup>24</sup>. So more interestingly, the French language had not just helped him, a “colonized” man, to discover French values; but more so, the French language helped him discover diversity and the richness of his difference, of his *métissage*.

### **The Francophonie is diversity**

This notion of diversity and *métissage* is one of the *raison d’être* of the Francophonie. It is one of the reasons why it continues to attract different countries with every continent represented, and with very different levels of development, political systems, values and religions. It is different from the English speaking Commonwealth in the sense that not all countries used to belong to the French colonial empire. At the end of communism, Eastern

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<sup>24</sup> « C’est en étudiant nos écrivains que Senghor a pris conscience de son appartenance à une civilisation différente mais non inférieure. De cette différence, il a fait une richesse. À partir de la notion de négritude, il a fait l’apologie du *métissage*. » (Personal translation)

European countries asked to be part of the OIF not only to be integrated into the international community but also to be part of a group that was promoting cultural diversity.

Francophonie in its essence promotes diversity. It doesn't solely promote French but welcome all other cultures and languages and celebrates them. These different cultures and languages are joined together through the common values conveyed by the French language. This ability of the Francophonie to welcome other cultures expands the elitist image of the French language and reminds us of what New York is about.

The French public is often unaware of these eager Francophones and Francophiles as 68% of the French are convinced that French culture is in decline<sup>25</sup>. Alain Decaux, one of the first French ministers of the Francophonie writes in his memoirs *Le tapis rouge*:

I still remember the shock I felt at my first meeting in 1985 of the High Council of the Francophonie ...I saw people coming running from all countries, of all races . They had nothing in common except their passion for the French language. When it was their time to speak, there were no speeches but declarations of love. That day, I asked myself if my countrymen were living up to this faith so eloquently displayed by foreigners<sup>26</sup> . (11)

The 2007 manifesto “For a World Literature in French” was signed in France by 44 writers who wanted to break down the de-facto division that exists in France between “French” and

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<sup>25</sup> Ipsos opinion poll 2014

<sup>26</sup> « Je me souviens encore du choc ressenti lors de la première réunion en 1985 du haut conseil de la francophonie...j'ai vu accourir des gens de tous les pays, de toutes les races. Ils n'avaient aucun point commun hors leur passion pour la langue française. Quand la parole leur a été donnée, ils n'ont pas prononcé de discours mais des déclarations d'amour. Ce jour là je me suis demandé si mes compatriotes étaient à la hauteur de cette foi si éloquentement affichée par des étrangers » (Personal translation)



“Francophone literature”. Their aim was to reunite French and Francophone literature under the same roof. Writers like Tahar Ben Jelloun, Edouard Glissant, Dai Sijie, Abdourahman

A. Waberi, Anna Moï ou Jacques Godbout advocated for a French language «*libérée de son pacte exclusif avec la nation*», freed from its exclusive pact with the nation.

### **New York: a Fertile Ground for the Diversity of the Francophonie**

At the same time, in 2007 novelist and academic Alain Mabanckou and novelist David Picouly in an article of French newspaper *Liberation* were commenting on Francophone literature in America<sup>27</sup>: “American students have a greater awareness of Francophone literature than French students. Most American universities have departments of Francophone Studies - This is not yet the case in France”. In 2015, among the ten chapters of one of the latest French course books used in American high schools and colleges *Imaginez, le Français sans Frontières* from Vista International, France is covered in just one chapter. The literature works include Dany Laferriere from Haiti, Ghislaine Sathoud of Congo and Maryse Condé of Guadeloupe.

As for New York, as a place that promotes diversity, it allows Francophonie to fully realize itself. French exists next to English, French Creole, Wolof and other African languages. Different cultures are celebrated and promoted through the French language. Each language and culture plays its part like in the works of Mauritian writer Ananda Devi who uses both French

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<sup>27</sup> « Les étudiants américains sont plus sensibilisés sur les lettres francophones que leurs collègues français. La plupart des universités américaines ont des départements d'études francophones - ce qui n'est pas encore le cas en France ». (Personal translation)

and Creole. For Francophone parents, this multilingualism is a reality. For parents coming from France, where French is the sole official language, it must be quite astonishing to watch on the DoE website a video of the New York City School Chancellor Carmen Farina speaking in French (dubbed!) and explaining in French to Francophone parents what the public school system can do for their children. It is less surprising for people coming from Francophone countries where the education systems are often bilingual or multilingual. A good example of an education system with bilingual education is Mauritius. A. Decaux writes in his memoirs:

Mauritius, French since the 17th century became English in 1810. Thanks to the relentlessness of Mauritians, the French language has continued to be spoken. Mauritians have become multilingual that's it, making the complementary use of French, English, of many languages spoken by its immigrants and using Creole as a mediator (208).<sup>28</sup>

What better symbol of the vibrancy of the Francophonie in New York than the French dual language classes cultural partnerships launched in March 2015. It partners different Francophone countries with New York City public schools that have dual language classes. There is for example a cultural partnership between PS 84 and Québec, the French American charter school and Tunisia.

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<sup>28</sup> « L'île Maurice, française depuis le XVIIe siècle, nous a été arrachée en 1810 par l'Angleterre. De par l'acharnement des Mauriciens, la langue française a continué à être parlée. Les Mauriciens sont devenus multilingues voilà tout, rendant complémentaires l'usage du français, de l'anglais, des langues nombreuses des peuples immigrés et vouant au créole un rôle médiateur. » (Personal translation)

The most surprising aspect of the Francophonie, is certainly its incredible diversity but more so the fruitful alliance between a French culture perceived as elitist and a myriad of different cultures from all over the world. It mirrors the essence of New York City, a place where a seemingly elitist culture has propelled the city to its status as a culture mecca. This culture is constantly enriched by the countless cultures from all around the world that the city has been welcoming.

In America, history shows us, there has always been a constant push and pull between contradicting ideas: the power to the people, to the parents and the communities and the desire to have “true” American citizens, with one language only: English. Theodore Roosevelt wrote in 1919 in a letter to the President of the American Defense society:

We have room for but one language here, and that is the English language, for we intend to see the crucible turns our people out as Americans, of American nationality, and not as dwellers in a polyglot boarding-house.

It is perhaps ironic that the robust democratic process has allowed the polyglot voices of parents to not only be heard, but also bring about change.

### **3. Parents and Bilingual Education**

#### **Bilingual Education in the USA: Lau vs Nichols**

Bilingual education without parents would not exist. They are always the driving force, the chief fundraisers, sometimes even the unpaid teachers. As Ramirez notes in “Dismay and Disappointment in parental involvement in Latino immigrant parents”, minority parents prove extremely strong advocates for the education of their children despite the fact that mainstream schools may have dismissed them because of their lack of language skills. Their lack of language skills hides the determination that immigrant parents have to see their children succeed. In a bilingual setting, these parents are recognized not only as equal partners but also as the experts. One of the most famous immigrant parent fights for the education of their children, is the 1974 Supreme Court case Lau vs Nichols in San Francisco. Families of Chinese American students asked for a more equal education because their children were being taught in an all-English environment and were denied the support they needed to improve their English skills. A major milestone was then reached by the Supreme Court who stated that:

The failure of the San Francisco school system to provide English language instruction to approximately 1,800 students of Chinese ancestry who do not speak English, or to provide them with other adequate instructional procedures, denies them a meaningful opportunity to participate in the public educational

program, and thus violates § 601 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which bans discrimination based "on the ground of race, color, or national origin".

This decision would lead the way to more ELL support and bilingual programs in public schools.

### **Opening Dual Language Classes: an American Process for French Speaking Parents**

As for the French bilingual initiatives in the New York City public schools, F. Jaumont and J. Ross, insist at the beginning of their essay "New York's French Bilingual Revolution" in *Bilingual Community Education and Multilingualism: Beyond Heritage Languages in a Global City* on the fact that: "Parents associations have been of critical importance in promoting French-English bilingual programs and generating the larger community and government support necessary to sustain innovative programs in both and private schools"(239).

The non-profit and volunteer-run EFNY<sup>29</sup>, Education en Français à New York – French Education in New York, dedicated to promoting the French language in New York City public schools, started with French afterschool programs that it still runs and has been instrumental in the creation of French dual language classes.

It is paradoxical when compared to the French school system where parents have long been kept physically and figuratively outside the school gates. Once in New York, parents discover and embrace the American process, "turning out as Americans", by starting grassroots initiatives to open French dual language programs. Being able to change their child's education

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<sup>29</sup> <http://www.efny.net/>

through lobbying, may take these parents by surprise when they realize its full potential. In France, parents seldom drive new initiatives or drastic changes in the field of education and their voice is muted by the omniscience of the experts<sup>30</sup> in the school system. Helene Godreau who is lobbying to open a French dual language class in Manhattan explains in *Guide de l'Education Bilingue NY*, “When I started the process, I was skeptical. My first reaction was to say: this is not possible, parents do not have such an influence on schools. And people told me, “you're so very French”<sup>31</sup> (58). Virgil de Voldère, who was instrumental in opening a dual language program within PS 84 said in an interview on FRANCE 24 television “It shows how much power we have in the US as parents. It would never happen in France. It’s an incredible gift”.

The process of opening dual language classes requires a lot of effort and varied strategies. I learned about some of these strategies during a panel, I attended at the second edition of the Bilingual Education Fair New York City that took place on Oct 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015. Parents who were instrumental in opening dual language programs explained how it is important to build a community through playgroups and afterschool classes and any types of groups with a connection to the language and let people know about the opportunity given by the New York City school system to open dual language programs. In the case of the dual language programs, it is

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<sup>30</sup> France is looking at the “statut des parents à l'école”. In November 2015, the French education minister was announcing at the French Assembly timid measures and that “Co-education that the 2013 law has inscribed as a principle is starting to take shape (sic)”

<sup>31</sup> « Quand je me suis lancée là-dedans, j'étais sceptique. Ma première réaction était de dire : ‘ce n'est pas possible, les parents n'ont pas une telle influence sur l'école. Et on m'a répondu : ‘t'es très française ».(Personal translation)

the first step of a long process according to the roadmap for opening French dual language classes written by parents:

1. Creating the family base and a support base in the community: outreach & data committee
2. Finding the school: location committee
3. Building the program: curriculum committee

This road map specifies that a minimum of 30 students English learners are necessary for a principal to start a K class and take the project seriously. Bilingual French/ English can be counted as English learners. The key is not only to find Francophone families who are interested in order to reach the minimum percentage of ELL students but also to reach non-Francophone families who are interested in having their children learn French in a bilingual setting. These non-Francophone families can only have access to a dual language class if there are enough Francophone families. It is in the two groups' best interests to find each other. During the Bilingual Fair panel, monolingual English families were questioning the fact that their children could only have access to a bilingual education if there were ELL students in their school. Does it still make sense in 2016, and in a global city such as New York, to restrict bilingual education to children coming from bilingual families?

Diana Limongi Gabriel, an American married to a Frenchman is lobbying for the opening of a French dual language class in Queens. She recounts in the *Guide de l'Education Bilingue NY*

that despite having recruited 90 interested families, she still has not succeeded yet. “It is frustrating...it is for my son that I do all this. The effort continues”(60).<sup>32</sup>

### **The Choice of a Bilingual Public Education**

What are the motivations of these parents? Like every parent, they want the best available education possible for their child but are unwilling to commit to the hefty price tag of a private option. Families, even those at the top of the revenue scale, cannot always afford a French bilingual private education like Le Lycée Français. These private schools (although they have financial aid, also have waiting lists and have a highly competitive admission process). Families immigrate or may transplant without the financial support of an employer and are not always planning to return to their home country in the near future. They may also be bi-national families with an American parent and the other one, Francophone. They also live in the more multi-culturally diverse neighborhoods of New York City as reported in these two articles of the New York Times about European families moving to Williamsburg, “Old Europe and New Brooklyn in Williamsburg”, and Western African families to Harlem, “Influx of African immigrants shifting national and New York demographics”. Along with the financial incentive of a free public education, studies and different accounts show that parents of dual language students are attracted by a bilingual education in an American setting. They want their children to have an

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<sup>32</sup>« C'est frustrant ...C'est pour mon fils que je fais tout ça. L'effort continue. » (Personal translation)



edge in the global job market: two languages instead of one. They believe in the value of teaching the other language at school in parallel to the English language in order to maintain an educational link to their native language and to also propel their children's English skills. But more so, a bilingual education reflects their bilingual reality. They don't want to withdraw to their own language community, as they are constantly moving between two or more languages. As this Persian parent recounts in "Persian Bilingual and Community Education among Iranian-Americans in New York City" written by Shirazi and Borjian in *Bilingual Community Education and Multilingualism: Beyond Heritage Languages in a Global City*:

I habitually love and praise my children in Persian, and habitually send them to bed and tell them to brush their teeth in English...The notion of ethnic language is false; we don't teach Persian to our children as part of their heritage or identity, and tell them that's why they have to learn it, because that ethnicizes Persian. That provincializes Persian...they will work here, have friends here; they are American, they need to speak English (166)

It was clearly demonstrated in the preliminary work towards the creation of a French-American charter school in 2009, that parents value the American public school system, its pedagogy and its diversity: "These parents were opposed to private education, both because of the high costs...and especially they had a strong commitment to public education and a belief that public schools should serve the needs of the community" (Jaumont, Ross, 240). They want their children to be schooled in their neighborhood and in their local community. As Wayne P. Thomas, Virginia P. Collier relate in *Dual Language Education for a Transformed World* about

the opening of dual languages classes in Washington D.C.in the seventies: “ The community was very committed to inner–city living and the public school system, and many parents were involved in resolution of a variety of social justice issues within their city and schools”. (viii)

Dual language classes promote not only two languages and two cultures but also often two teaching cultures as one of their teachers may also have been first trained in a system outside America. These two teaching cultures further enrich the school as Thomas and Collier explain:

Eliana Roman, the Spanish-medium teacher, had been raised in the Chilean teacher education system, focused on discovery learning, that has been developed by the famous poet Gabriela Mistral. As a result, she brought a new dimension to the school, mentoring other teachers and creatively mixing age groups throughout the school for varied cross-cultural activities (ix)

Parents’ push for a bilingual education for their children is successful in bringing changes to the NYC public schools. This could not happen without the right legislation in place and the Department of Education. What is the position of the Department of Education towards French dual language classes and its role in implementing them?

#### **4. “New York Public Schools Welcome Immigrant-Origin Students”**

##### **New York Public Schools English Language Learner’s initiatives**

In the October 2015 New York Times article “Dual Language programs are on the Rise, even for English Speakers”, 180 dual language programs were recorded citywide. The School Chancellor Carmen Fariña is determined to push the expansion of dual language classes and announced in January 2015 the opening of 40 new ones in 2015-2016: “In some ways we are all immigrant children, and as an English Language Learner, I know education makes the difference and these new dual language programs will give students new pathways to college or a meaningful career,”

In a global city like New York, welcoming English Language learners (ELLs), is one of the priorities of the Department of Education, DoE. According to the 2013-2014 demographic report of its Office of English Language Learners, 43.3% of the DoE students speak another language than English at home, more than 180 languages are spoken and 14.3% of students are registered as ELLs. Welcoming English Language Learners means not only to help students to acquire English language skills but to also draw from the linguistic richness they offer. New York City’s School Chancellor, Carmen Fariña, declared in January 2015:

We are also recognizing that speaking multiple languages is an asset for students, families, schools and our entire City. As a part of these programs, our kids will learn new cultures, parents will come into classrooms in new ways, and together we will make this system the best urban school district in the country.

In a conference at the State Department, *New York City Public schools Welcome Immigrant-Origin Students* in November 2015 Tatiana Kleyn, Associate Professor at CUNY, explained:

Unlike students who are only educated in English, it allows our nation and our multilingual New York City to build on the cultural and linguistic resources that our students bring. It's really a gift, and we have to enrich it...Unlike other states like Massachusetts, Arizona, and California that have banned bilingual education, New York State promotes bilingual education, and we're very lucky to live in a city where Chancellor Farina is always promoting bilingual education, where Deputy Chancellor Milady Baez is pushing for more dual-language bilingual programs to be opening across our city.

Over sixty percent of English Language Learners are newcomers to the city's public schools (defined as less than 3 years in the system) and some arrive to these schools late in their schooling. The DoE has meaningful ways to integrate these newcomers which include the International Network for Public Schools that supports 18 New York City high schools serving newly arrived immigrants who are English learners and the CDI organization<sup>33</sup>. The French Heritage Language Program is the perfect illustration of the capacity of the system to integrate recent immigrants. The French Heritage Language Program, or FHLP, was founded in 2005, to respond to an influx of young immigrants from Western Africa and Haiti. It is a partnership

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<sup>33</sup> <http://www.cdi-ny.org/>

between the cultural services of the French Embassy in the United States, the Alfred and Jane Ross Foundation and the International Network for Public Schools, where French speakers according to the FHLP 2015 annual report, represent up to 30 % of the student population. Their coursework prepares them for the Advanced Placement French exam and for college. Their previous schooling in French is seen as an asset for their new beginnings in America. FHLP are not alone in this belief as Thomas P Wayne and Virginia P Collier write in *Dual Language Education for a Transformed World*: “In our study the variable that most strongly influenced success in English was how much formal schooling these students had received in their home country and in their home language before arriving in the US, NOT how much proficiency in English they had achieved” (xi). These students’ previous schooling and other language is an asset that will help them better integrate their new country and acquire better English skills.

In New York City, all parents of new public school students are required to complete a Home Language Identification Survey (HLIS). This survey helps the school system identify students who may have limited English language proficiency. Once potential English Language Learners (ELLs) are identified, they are administered the state-required Identification Test, within ten days of enrollment. The results of the Identification Test determine whether students are entitled to bilingual/ESL programs and services. According to the New York City D.O.E. Language Allocation policy guidelines, there is three program options for ELLs: Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE), Dual Language, and freestanding English as a Second Language

(ESL). In TBE and freestanding ESL programs, students leave when they reach a certain proficiency level on the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT). On the other hand, ELLs in Dual Language programs can be instructed in both languages from kindergarten through to the 12th grade. ELLs are not required to leave this program once they reach proficiency. The programs are designed to continue to develop the student's native language as well as his or her English skills. Finally, and this is the major difference with these programs, it is also open to monolingual English students, MEL, who have the opportunity to learn a second language. Both ELL and MEL students are learning from their shared teachers and from each other. A dual language programs can use a variety of bilingual strategies. Among them is the "50-50" strategy of spending half of the instructional time in one language and the other half in English. Another is the "90-10" strategy, which spends 90% of the time in their first language until reading proficiency is achieved in the student's mother tongue. Among the other options, "side by side" where students are grouped by native language and subsequently alternate between the two languages or the "roller coaster" with one language in the morning and the other one in the afternoon. To promote bilingualism, each school has to achieve its own language equilibrium inside and outside the classroom as in the cases presented in *Bilingual Community Education and Multilingualism: Beyond Heritage Languages in a Global City* by Garcia, Zakharia, Otcu. The culture of the school and the values promoted in the families and in the school-wide community are also essential. It is the combination of the

bilingual strategy, and the bilingual environment both inside and outside the classroom and the culture of the school, as always when looking at any successful endeavors in schools that will help schools be successful with their bilingual programs.

### **Dual Language Classes Welcome**

When looking at all the steps in the process of opening a dual language class, once a base of interested parents has been established, finding the school is the next step. According to the members of the panel of the 2015 Bilingual Fair and as Maria Kot, a parent representing the Russian dual language classes, explained, parents coming with a proposition of dual language programs bring a promise of academic change to schools. According to Kot, Benson PS 200 was a school that was underperforming and undersubscribed before the Russian dual language classes started. It is crucial for parents to find a school that has the space to welcome such programs as the enrolment numbers will increase. It does not come as a surprise that the majority of the French dual language classes are in Brooklyn where schools have more space than in Manhattan. It is also critical for parents to find a principal who would be interested by this type of program. The best targets are schools that are slightly underperforming and that have been left aside by parents because of unsatisfactory academic results and need to improve their reputation. A (new) principal who wants to turnaround a school and who understands that a dual language program will help him or her to leave his/her mark is the decisive factor. Gentrifying neighborhoods have seen the opening of dual language classes because they see an influx of young professional

parents who can't afford high rents and who have high academic expectations for their children.

As they moved to a more affordable neighborhood, they don't want their children to miss on their education. The current rezoning plans in Dumbo where families don't want to be zoned out of PS 8 to PS 307, a school with lower test scores and higher absenteeism shows how sensitive school issues can be in gentrifying neighborhoods.

The subject of schools in gentrifying neighborhoods in New York City can't be covered in this paper but we can look at what French dual language classes are bringing to these schools. Giselle McGee, the previous principal of The Carroll School in Brooklyn who had implemented a French dual language program explains in the *Guide de l'Education Bilingue NY* "In 2006, there were just over 300 students: families were avoiding our school." There are now 940 students . This could certainly attributed to the rapid gentrification of the neighborhood but Mc Gee continues: "the dual language program has played a key role in the change of the school's perception". At the School for International Studies, a sixth-through-12th-grade school in Cobble Hill, Brooklyn, enrollment recently increased to 100 sixth-grade students this year from 30 last year. In the New York Times article previously cited, "The principal, Jillian Juman, estimated that half of that interest came from the school's recently added International Baccalaureate program, and the other half from families looking for a dual-language program, which is offered in French."

### **Dual Language Programs: a Solution to the De-Facto Segregation?**



These are changes that don't go unnoticed by the Department of Education. Furthermore, one of the other reasons for promoting dual language classes is that they create multilingual students out of English monolingual speakers and avoid the marginalization of ELL students, as other programs tend to do. Students of both groups are mostly in the same classes and, most importantly, they share the same educational journey. They have the opportunities to learn a second language, sharing the same difficulties and opportunities. Dual language programs present a lot of advantages even if not all dual language programs are equal in terms of quality. Finding the right teachers with the right credentials is paramount and sometimes difficult. But there is an ultimate reason that motivates the DoE. As pointed out in the New York Times article on dual language programs, these programs also “offer a partial solution to the intractable problem of de facto school segregation”. John B. King Jr., the acting education secretary, states in this article that dual-language programs “can be a vehicle to increase socioeconomic and racial diversity in schools”.

### **French Dual Language Programs and Diversity**

This seems to be particularly applicable to the French language because of its elitist image that may attract upper middle class parents to their local public school but also draw families from all corners of the Francophonie. It is interesting to check if these French dual language programs are in schools with a diverse population of students. As of Jan 9, 2016, the

statistics of each school with a French dual language program, found on the DoE website was as following:

Schools	Hispanics/Blacks/Whites/Asians/Multiracial
PS 20 The Clinton Hill School Brooklyn	22/54/16/3/5
PS 58 The Carroll School Brooklyn	12/ 3/72 / 3/ 4/ 9
PS84 The Lilian Weber School Manhattan	42/13/38/ 2/ 4
PS110 The Monitor School, Brooklyn	22/ 5/ 65/ 4/2
PS 133 The William A Butler School, Brooklyn	32/ 27/ 32/ 3/ 6
The New York French American Charter School, Harlem	14/65/16/ -/ - ( <i>Guide de l'Education Bilingue NY</i> )
PS/IS 76 The A. Phillips Randolph School, Harlem	17/79/ 4/ 1/ -
PS 3 The Bedford Village School, Brooklyn	11/72/ 2/ 4/ 4
MS51, The William Alexander School, Brooklyn	19/10/57/12/ 2
MS256 Academic and Athletic Excellence School, UW Manhattan	38/51/ 7/ 2/ 1
JHS 88 Peter Rouget, Brooklyn	60/11/11/18/ 1
School for International Studies, Brooklyn	35/42/16/ 4/ 1
Citywide	41/25/16/16/ 1

These statistics reveal a diverse population with differences between the schools. It reflects on one hand the diversity of the Francophone world like at PS 3 and PS/IS 76, while showing the

potential for integration at some of the schools. *Le Guide de l'Éducation Bilingue NY* which is a resource for parents, visited all schools and describes them in depth. The authors write about integration happening in these schools. For example, PS 84 on the upper west side:

The clash of cultures between rather well off families in the bilingual programs (mostly white ) and those in less affluent blocks was a recurring concern at the start of the program and is less felt now . Overall there is a pretty good atmosphere prevailing . Diversity is a "plus" of the program , reflecting the population of the area with subsidized housing and brownstones for wealthy families . The children come from France , Africa , Canada and the Caribbean (96).<sup>34</sup>

They further add “At the same time, the population has changed dramatically : ten years ago , only 5% of students were white. Today they are 33%.”(96)<sup>35</sup>. For PS 133, the guide mentions “The student body of 133 PS is mixed .The school recruits its students from two districts , 13 and 15, which include both an affluent neighborhood like Park Slope and a less well off immigrant neighborhoods like Sunset Park” (102)<sup>36</sup>. These programs, for the majority, have been recently

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<sup>34</sup> « Le choc des cultures entre familles plutôt favorisées des programmes bilingues (majoritairement blancs) et ceux des quartiers moins favorisés, préoccupation récurrente lors du début du programme, se fait moins sentir désormais. Au total c'est une atmosphère plutôt bon enfant qui prévaut. La diversité est un « plus ». du programme, reflétant la population du quartier, entre immeubles subventionnés et « brownstones » pour familles aisées. Les enfants sont originaires de France, d'Afrique, du Canada et des Caraïbes ». (Personal translation)

<sup>35</sup> « Dans le même temps, la population a changé radicalement: il y a dix ans, seulement 5 % des élèves étaient blancs. Aujourd'hui ils sont 33 %. » (Personal translation)

<sup>36</sup> « Le corps étudiant de PS 133 est mélangé. L'école recrute ses élèves sur deux districts, le 13 et le 15 qui comprennent aussi bien des quartiers aisés comme Park Slope que des quartiers d'immigrés moins favorisé comme Sunset Park » (Personal translation)

introduced. Further studies should look in depth at whether the racial make up of these schools is changing in addition to examining whether gentrification has an impact or even is impacted by these dual language programs.

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## Conclusion

The French-English Dual language programs in New York City public schools started in 2007 with one teacher and a class of 24 students in Brooklyn. They are now over 1,000 students and 50 teachers in eight elementary schools and four middle schools throughout the city. Dual language programs and particularly French dual language programs in New York City schools reunite very different interests. There are the expected interests of communities wanting to keep a home language strong. Francophone parents wanting their children to use the language as an asset for a head start in the education race. English speaking parents wanting to give a head start to their monolingual children, as the world of business, and of science is multilingual. The Francophone governments and the French government in particular as noted in the New York Times article "A Big Advocate of French in New York's Schools: France." in January 2015, are also interested in promoting the right of access to their countries language education for their citizens living outside their boundaries. Schools and school principals are also very keen, as they want to have an edge or improve their school enrollment and reputation by implementing a dual language program, as they will attract highly motivated families who have lobbied for it as well as middle class families. The New York City Department of Education sees the dual language classes as the expression of their student's body diversity. But ultimately, French dual language classes may also provide a welcome answer to the de-facto segregation. The French language

attracts a wide range of families. Families interested by the legacy it represents, by its reputation for excellence and by its openness to many other cultures. Further studies are needed to explore the full impact of the introduction of these dual language programs on a school community, and not solely on the dual language students, the impact on the school culture, parents' involvement, curriculum, academic results, absenteeism, and racial and social diversity.

These dual language programs also demonstrate how in the field of education diverse interests can converge and bring together unexpected partners to create new educational opportunities. Diversity, synergies, opportunities, grassroots movement, elitism, excellence, and multi-cultures: it is a New York story.

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