Strategic Scholars and Policy Outcomes: Causal Knowledge in Language of Education Policy Debates

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ABSTRACT: This paper explores how academic experts influence language of instruction policy in Africa. It points to the ideational connections that continue to pervade the relationship between France and its former colonies. Francophone African states are changing their language policies in primary education, using local languages as a medium of instruction, rather than only French. These changes result in part from a new idea transmitted from French foreign ministers to African policymakers. Once viewing African languages as competitors to French, French leaders are now welcoming these languages openly in African schools. This is a dramatic policy reversal, and it contradicts expectations of path dependency and public policy inertia. The French policy-makers' conversion can be traced to the writing and advocacy of a strategic scholarly community, which began exercising influence over the leadership of France and *la Francophonie* in the 1990s. Their influence changed the perception of French leaders regarding the utility of local languages in education and caused them to include this element consistently in their education strategy for Africa. In contrast, a lack of comparable agreement within the intellectual communities of the Anglophone world has led to ambivalence in support for mother tongue education emanating from the North, and an irregular application of indigenous language policies in Anglophone Africa. Unlike traditional accounts of epistemic communities, this study focuses on the strategic political activity of scholars. And unlike traditional accounts of policy diffusion, it reveals ideational linkages between strong and weak states, identifying the phenomenon of intellectual dependency

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The French language is the only one to be used in schools. It is forbidden for teachers to use local speech with their students.[1]

William Ponty, Governor-General of French West Africa, 1912

French can be a vector of hope…by making alliance…with all of the languages in her bosom...[2]

Francophonie Charter, 1997

Replacing its long-time subjugation of African languages, France is now defending them vigorously. This dramatic reversal in the relationship of French with African languages reveals a shift in French policy-makers' interests, whose origin is a transformation of their causal ideas. These altered ideas not only affect policy preferences of French leaders, but their diffusion influences policy outcomes across Francophone Africa.

This research intersects with the Contentious Knowledge project at several levels. At the most general level, it demonstrates how academic expertise can inform policy outcomes. Concretely, it shows how scholarly communities can create a sense of crisis with their provision of information, providing a window for policy change. More subtly, it speaks to the importance of framing. At the deepest level, this addresses how policymakers' interests are formed and altered. Scholarly communities can alter policymakers' ideas about how to achieve certain outcomes they desire.

It concurs with the insights of the Contentious Knowledge project as to the indeterminacy of outcomes and peoples' cognitive uncertainty, which give great power to advocacy networks, NGOs, and epistemic communities in brokering peoples' perceptions of their interests. These brokers usually have *visible* roles as vocal advocates and carriers of scientific expertise, and they are successful often because they frame issues in terms of prevailing norms of human rights. Perhaps in contrast, however, my project finds that the academic community has been most successful in this language issue because it has *not* framed the issue as one of minority rights, but instead has presented it as a pedagogical issue that will ultimately achieve an outcome that the policymakers (and parents) want anyway. And, interestingly, this makes politics in this area – language in African education – *less* contentious than one would assume.

As an empirical observation, multilingual education has increased across the African continent. This is striking for several reasons. High ethno-linguistic diversity is a standard and central explanation for poor growth, weak governance and conflict, particularly in Africa (Easterly & Levine

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[1] All translations from French are mine. Arrêté no.1633, 2 Nov 1912. Cited in Turcotte 1983, 66.

[2] Charte de Hué, 1.

1997).[3] The European model relied especially on a common language of instruction to bind disparate language groups into a cohesive national unit (Weber 1976, Ch. 7).

Yet, ignoring these historical and empirical lessons, governments across Africa are enacting policies that highlight rather than diminish their states' diversity. By promoting the use of several local languages in their education systems, they raise the possibility of perpetual multilingualism within their borders. The consequences of this change are profound, with implications for economic growth, conflict prevention and democracy.

Why are they making these changes? More than 25 years ago, in his classic article, "The Second Image Reversed," Peter Gourevitch (1978) reminded scholars that not only did domestic politics determine how a state would react in the international context, but that the international environment often influenced its domestic structures. An important element of the international environment that he explicitly left for subsequent analysis was the role of ideas in shaping domestic policies. Many have since taken up this line of research (Hall 1989, Sikkink 1991, Goldstein and Keohane 1993, Katzenstein 1996, McNamara 1998). Most scholars who incorporate ideas into a rationalist framework examine the impact of actor preferences. Others, in a more constructivist vein, explore the origin of these preferences.

This study engages those studying both the origin and impact of preferences by claiming that two policy changes – in France and in Africa – are related. It invokes questions of power and autonomous decision-making in sovereign states. While strong states may not *control* weak states as they did under formal colonial rule, they continue to *influence* their policy choices by affecting the ideas behind them. This goes to the heart of preference formation. In particular, it maintains that actors' causal ideas – calculations of means-ends relationships – are constitutive elements of their fundamental preferences (Hall 2005, 135). Goldstein and Keohane (1993) identify causal ideas as independent variables that can help determine actors' decisions. But they do not explore how these ideas are formed. Depending on the relative malleability of these causal beliefs, this could be *the* critical area of study to determine major reasons for policy change over continuity. Changing ideas can break the path-dependent trajectory of policy inertia.

Actors' beliefs about the effects of a course of action are always uncertain.[4] Peter Hall recognizes this uncertainty, and resolves it by pointing to the importance of framing: "A 'frame' is an effort to portray an issue in terms that link it to other beliefs" (Hall 2005, 134). Yet, his account is relatively free of agency; uncertain governments are simply persuaded by new ideas that are well framed. The frame, however, must be presented by *someone*. Curiously outside the bounds of general preference formation literature are those working from the angle of epistemic communities (Haas 1990 and 1992; Adler & Haas 1992). Epistemic community scholars provide the motor, but they neglect the framing. A group of earnest scholars appears simply to present a sensible cause-effect relationship that persuades policy makers by the weight of its evidence.

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[3] See also: Alesina, Baqir, & Easterly 1999, Collier & Gunning 1999, Rodrik 1999, Keefer & Knack 2002.

[4] Add reference from Rathbun in ISQ

My argument responds to this agent-structure problem by emphasizing the deliberate efforts of strategic scholars to promote their ideas in ways that appeal to policy makers' larger goals. Strategically, they persuade leaders that a certain course of action will lead to ends the leader already desires. In my case, a scholarly community in France convinced leaders responsible for education policy in their African sphere of influence that teaching in local languages would further their goal of French linguistic expansion more than the prior policy of French immersion. This shift in causal ideas led to a different message communicated to African governments and ultimately contributed to changed language policy outcomes in African education.

This study challenges existing analysis of the role of ideas in policy outcomes in two ways. First, it reveals the interaction of agency and framing. As preference formation scholars appropriately give agency to ideas themselves, they tend to discount the role of certain human actors. And as epistemic community scholars point to actual actors, they neglect the framing. A more accurate account considers both the agents and their efforts to frame their arguments, providing an explanation for policy *change* over the expected inertia of path dependency.

Second, the analysis provides deeper insight into policy diffusion than previously has been offered. While a widespread increase in multilingual education across Africa appears to be a result of diffusion, traditional accounts that attribute such similar policy decisions to mounting benefits to neighbors adopting similar policies and tipping models based on reputational consequences (Schelling 1978, Granovetter 1978, Finnemore 1996, Simmons and Elkins 2004) do not reflect the rationale of this particular process accurately. Simmons and Elkins (2004) identify *learning mechanisms* provided by successful policy innovations of other governments and *emulation* of cultural reference groups, which come closer, but their large-n study is unable to capture the microfoundations of this process. This paper, by tracing the process of ideational change in a center of cultural reference (France) for a large group of countries (Francophone Africa) reveals precisely how this diffusion occurs. In so doing, it unveils the power relationship and constraints on empirical sovereignty created not through military or economic ties but through intellectual dependency.

Briefly, the argument is the following: Tactical scholars in France advocated an innovative idea to their government, which offered leaders a new causal pathway to achieve France's perennial goal of linguistic *rayonnement*. They proposed that using local languages in the first years of education in Francophone African states actually helps children to learn French in the long run. Thus, France could begin openly supporting the use of African languages in education without compromising its ultimate goal of French language expansion. France communicated this changed strategy through multilateral and bilateral Francophone agencies via public declarations and promises of financial support for multilingual education policies. This is a dramatic turnaround in France's long-term preference for French-only education in Africa. It contrasts the trend in Anglophone Africa, long the site of widespread use of local languages in education, but recently demonstrating reversals in this policy.

As France communicated this new message in the 1990s, policies in most of Francophone Africa have begun to promote local languages. The policies certainly were not an automatic response to external suggestion. To the contrary. It was only because influence agents within African states – notably academics, missionary linguists and language NGOs – had been exerting similar ideational pressure on governments for a long time that governments found ready partners for their new policy. And only because materials, programs and personnel were already available could governments actually undertake such reform. There is clearly no neat division between international and domestic politics, but one must bracket a portion of the story to make its presentation manageable. This essay will focus on external influence rather than internal dynamics of policy change.[5]

First, I will outline the theoretical literature that this research joins and challenges. I will use the case of language policy in African education to specify the causal process of altered preferences among French policymakers and its diffusion to Francophone Africa, and I will conclude with broader implications.

CAUSAL IDEAS AS FUNDAMENTAL PREFERENCES

Few scholars hold positions at the extreme ends of the spectrum – either that ideas are all that matter as causal factors or that material interests always trump ideas. Debates concern the interaction of the two and the ways ideas can be incorporated into rationalist analysis, and fruitful work has emerged about how to blend the two perspectives (Kahler 1998). Goldstein and Keohane (1993) offer a typology of how ideas may influence political outcomes. One of them is the "road map" route of idea influence. That is, ideas have effects by showing leaders a causal relationship between their goals and a new strategy to achieve it (Goldstein & Keohane 1993, 11). Like other rationalist idea scholars, they maintain that this is a change in strategy, rather than a change in preferences, because the overall goal remains the same. There are two problems with stopping there.

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[5] These domestic variables are discussed in Albaugh 2007 and Albaugh 2005, Ch. 5.

First, we want to know the answer to a prior question: Where did the idea come from? If indeed it is true that France communicated a new message to Francophone Africa, it leads necessarily to a question of *why* France changed those ideas in the first place. As Ruggie argues, it is not enough simply to incorporate ideas into the preference formation of the actors in a traditional rationalist paradigm. The origins and transformation of ideas must themselves be problematized as an outcome variable (Ruggie 1998).

Second, there is a definitional dispute about causal ideas. As Goldstein and Keohane remove means-ends beliefs from the label of "preferences," this reduces their import to instrumentalism. But a new means-ends belief may well alter one's value commitments in important ways. Peter Hall (2005) divides preferences differently, reserving "fundamental" preferences to those beliefs one holds before strategies are altered by interaction with other actors or with institutional constraints. He includes in fundamental preferences *causal ideas*. These "count" as constituitive preferences because of actors' uncertainty over means-ends schemas. I would argue that causal ideas reside on a continuum, from private means-ends beliefs to those influenced by what one expects other actors to do and/or those motivated by institutional constraints. But in either case, the change in causal ideas is what changes a policy.

Uncertainty over consequences of policy choice makes reversing policies very difficult. Paul Pierson (2000) explains that because political institutions (including public policies) do not confront dense competing institutions that instantly capitalize on inefficient performance as do markets, the competition that can motivate change in economics is even more rare in politics. Moreover, great complexity and uncertainty over outcomes of policy choices makes actors' mental maps and personal biases increasingly important as they make policy decisions. Both lack of competition and impracticality of simple updating contribute to a strong inclination toward path dependency and policy inertia in public policies (Pierson 2000, 259-60).

If mental maps or ideas about cause-effect relationships become malleable, however, this is a critical arena for potential policy change. The *ideas* as a reason for policy change become central.

In constructivist literature, it is usually the idea that is the focus, rather than its carrier. Yet this skirts *agency*, an unresolved issue in the constructivist project. By focusing on the power of ideas to constrain actors' choices, scholars risk structural determinism – structure being the 'cage' of ideas in which actors are socialized.[6] Yet, at the same time, constructivists emphasize that people can *change* ideas – a power held by those with the ability to reflect on their surroundings and to use persuasion to alter the beliefs of others (Haas 2004, [32]). In this sense, constructivism is concerned with the making of circumstances (Ruggie 1998, 877). The problem is that circumstances have to be constraining enough to matter, but not so constraining as to create a rigid and powerful structure that eliminates the potential for agency:[7] a tension between the strength of the ideas themselves and the strength of their carriers.

Though they do not portray it in this way, scholars studying epistemic communities are providing a motor for changed fundamental preferences. Epistemic communities are knowledge-based groups whose members believe in the same cause-and-effect relationships, use the same tests of validity to assess them, and share common values (Haas 1990, 55). Scholars posit that such groups change the ideas of policy makers through their provision of new knowledge about causal relationships. Epistemic communities are different from interest groups because their commitment to tests of validity make them more impartial than lobbyists for a particular agenda: "Unlike an interest group, confronted with anomalous data, they would retract their advice and suspend judgment" (Ibid). Scholars have shown that altered ideas, prompted by an epistemic community, facilitate international agreements – on arms control or environmental protection, for example. This literature assumes that the net outcome of the community's efforts will be that "policy coordination is enhanced" (Haas 1992, 12).

Two factors make the scenario I describe strain the confines of standard epistemic community analysis. First, it is dealing with *social* science – not natural science, not ecology, not even economics. The topic of language and learning is extremely contested terrain. Haas himself points out that most social scientific communities do not fall into the definition he has created (Ibid., fn. 23). The social power of epistemic communities comes from their claims to knowledge supported by tests of validity (Haas 1992, 17). Since all agree on the same truth tests, consensus becomes a possibility.[8] Social scientific communities differ from natural scientific communities in the relative elusiveness of consensus.

Second, and as a consequence, my analysis emphasizes framing. Epistemic community scholars have insisted that the groups they study are impartial, bound by "truth tests," and more likely than interest groups to provide information that is politically untainted. They do not change their message depending on their audience. To alter the new knowledge for acceptability would be disingenuous and counter to their claims of impartiality.

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[6] "Social facts" and the "logic of appropriateness" are the most obvious examples: Searle 1995; March & Olson 1998.

[7] Wendt discusses this tension in 1987.

[8] Haas acknowledges the elusiveness of objective truth, pursuing instead "usable knowledge." Haas 2004, [11].

My argument emphasizes the deliberate efforts of members of scholarly communities to promote their ideas. Rather than "cognitive baggage handlers," a relatively passive image portrayed by Haas, scholars in my story act more like gift wrappers or visual merchandisers, attentive to the attractive packaging of their message. In essence, these groups behave like interest groups, albeit interest groups bound together by causal beliefs. This may initially muddy the important distinction between epistemic communities and advocacy groups. The Contentious Knowledge project seems to place these groups in a similar category, as it recognizes that NGOs, advocacy networks and epistemic communities all frame issues for publics and policymakers, serving to channel interests toward their preferred policy outcomes.

When we allow the possibility of interest group pressure in the story of ideas, it begins to resemble accounts of international advocacy networks (Keck & Sikkink 1998, Klotz 1995, Nadelmann 1990). Here there *is* an explicit actor – an "entrepreneur" working from a platform of an advocacy organization (Keck & Sikkink 1998). While my study similarly shows purposeful agency, it is largely a behind-the-scenes effort by a group of committed intellectuals, rather than public shaming of recalcitrant governments by international activists.

The influence of these intellectuals works by changing individual policymakers' preferences. This study looks at the preferences of two sets of policymakers. First, French and British ministers and bureaucrats charged with policy formulation in Africa, and second, African policymakers controlling education decisions in their states. The policy outcome to be considered is medium of instruction in primary schools. As indicated at the outset, this language issue holds great import for economic and political developments in African states. I claim that the outcome in a certain set of African states hinges on changing preferences – causal ideas – within both European and African policymakers. The change within European policymakers is more consequential, I argue, because of the ideational ties that exist between French and Francophone African policymakers, which is much less pronounced in their Anglophone counterparts.

The spread of an idea from a center to a periphery suggests diffusion. Explanations for policy diffusion generally fall into two categories (Simmons & Elkins 2004). First, many use the analogy of a tipping model (Schelling 1978, Granovetter 1978, Risse *et al* 1999) to explain how adoption of a policy by one country alters the benefits to another country of its adoption, with payoffs increasing to a certain point as more countries adopt the policy. In my case, however, the benefits of adopting a multilingual policy do not increase as more countries adopt it. A second explanation for diffusion of an innovation is that adoption by one country provides new information to others about its costs and benefits (Rogers 2003). This is essentially a learning mechanism. Simmons and Elkins (2004) specify that governments can learn in several ways: they can glean from the success of innovations in other states; they can learn through communication with actors in their policy networks; or they can be influenced by their cultural reference groups. These authors find support in their large-n analysis only for the learning from cultural reference groups, and only among states that share religious similarities. I would argue that the narrowness of these results arises because their macro study could not tap into the microfoundations of the precise process of ideational transfer. It is a causal process that must be traced methodically through a particular case. This study takes up this task, revealing that policy diffusion rests on the efforts of individual strategic actors, and that it perpetuates the intellectual dependency of peripheral states on their cultural center. Simmons and Elkins' notion of vertical, rather than horizontal, diffusion captures the "soft" coercive properties of ideational influence.

With an insistence on agency and framing, and a focus on policy diffusion that amounts to continued ideological influence rather than international cooperation, I shed light on an apparent empirical and theoretical contradiction. Why are so many African governments reversing policy course and experimenting with multilingual education policies?

LANGUAGE CHOICE IN AFRICAN EDUCATION

"Language is the quintessential entitlement issue," notes Donald Horowitz (Horowitz 1985, 220). Official policies regarding the use of language in public settings grant or withhold recognition to its speakers. A government's policies regarding the language used as medium of instruction in primary schools disclose its vision of the country's future. Given historical precedent, empirical findings and the logic of nation-building, why would a government choose a policy that magnified its fragmentation?

One answer might be that the leader aims to avoid *potential* conflict by granting concessions to groups that demand special or equal treatment. This would fit a rationalist bargaining explanation that sees governments as responding to interest group or elite pressures (Laitin 1992, Brass 1991). Another answer might be that international human rights activists have finally persuaded (or shamed) governments to acknowledge the rights of minority language groups within their borders (Risse, Ropp and Sikkink 1999, Tollefson and Tsui 2004, Skutnabb-Kangas 2000, de Varennes 1996, Bamgbose 2004). Widespread multilingual education thus reflects international norms that favor protecting minority languages.

Neither of these explanations is satisfactory. Instead, I argue that African governments enacting mother tongue education policies are responding to two different forces – one a "push" and the other a "pull." The push comes not from language groups demanding rights to use their languages in education – indeed, many speakers explicitly do not want this "right" – but from an alliance of indigenous linguists and NGOs (often missionary), who use a recent accumulation of written languages and evidence of the success of using them in education to offer an alternative to African governments facing failing education systems. I call this alliance an "evidentiary community." Their pressure, however, has been building for a long time, and it might not have been accepted officially if another factor had not provided a moment of opportunity. This is the factor that this essay will explore. It is only half of the explanation, but it is so compelling that it demands separate treatment.

This opportunity, the pull, is provided by the new discourse of a former colonizer, France. Rather than a vague call by the entire international community to promote languages in support of diversity, a specific, new message began to emanate from France in the 1990s. Reversing its long-standing preference for French-only as the medium of instruction in African primary schools, France began to communicate its support for initial schooling in local languages. This was not because France had suddenly decided to care about local languages, but because its leadership had been convinced by a Francophone group of scholars that learning initially in a local language helps a child to learn French.

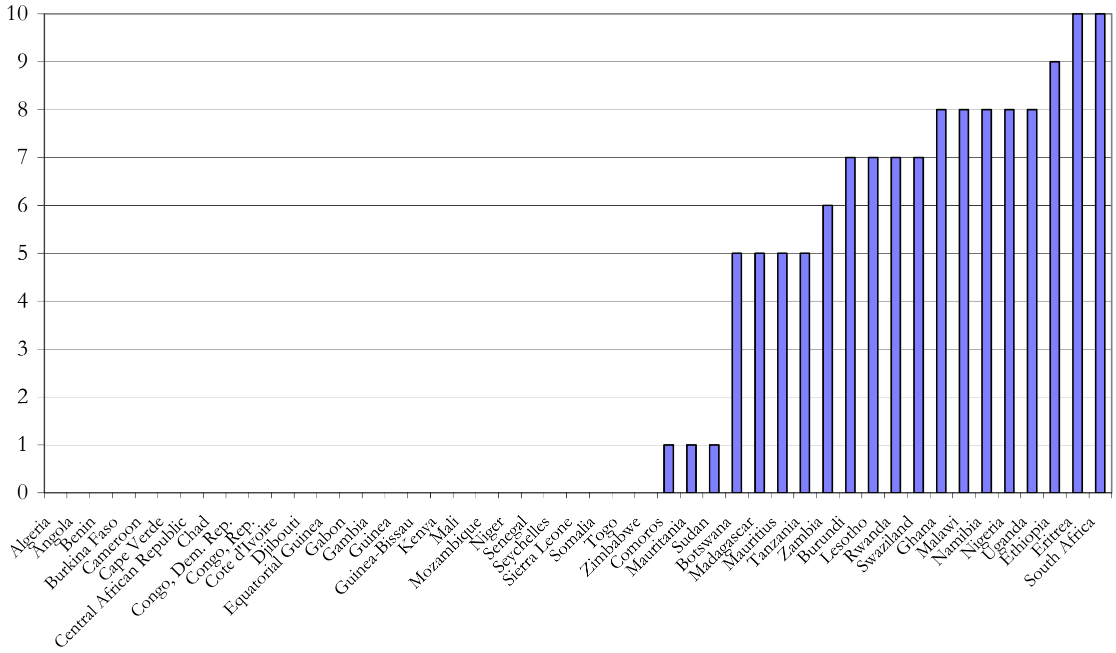
These, then, are the advocates of multilingual education in Africa: the strange bedfellows of indigenous linguists, missionaries, and French academics. They do not acknowledge one another; indigenous linguists have long been hostile to France, missionaries see themselves as removed from politics, and a link with religious efforts is an anathema to secular France. But their individual efforts have combined to create a coincidence of forces that propel this changed policy.

While I suspected something unique was happening in Francophone Africa, I needed to verify it empirically. Unfortunately, there were no consistent data available on language use in education for the present, much less four decades ago and over time. So I created an original database of language policies in all African states. I coded each country's medium of education policy yearly from independence to 2003 on a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 indicating exclusive use of a European language in primary education and 10 denoting the exclusive use of several African languages. The gradations between refer to the number of languages used and the extent of their use across the school system.[9]

Figure 1 shows the level of local language use in education at independence, and Figure 2 shows the levels in 2003. Whereas at the time of independence, only 20 out of 47 African states (43 percent) were using local languages in primary education, 38 states (81 percent) are doing so currently.

FIGURE 1

Level of Local Language Use at Independence, All Africa



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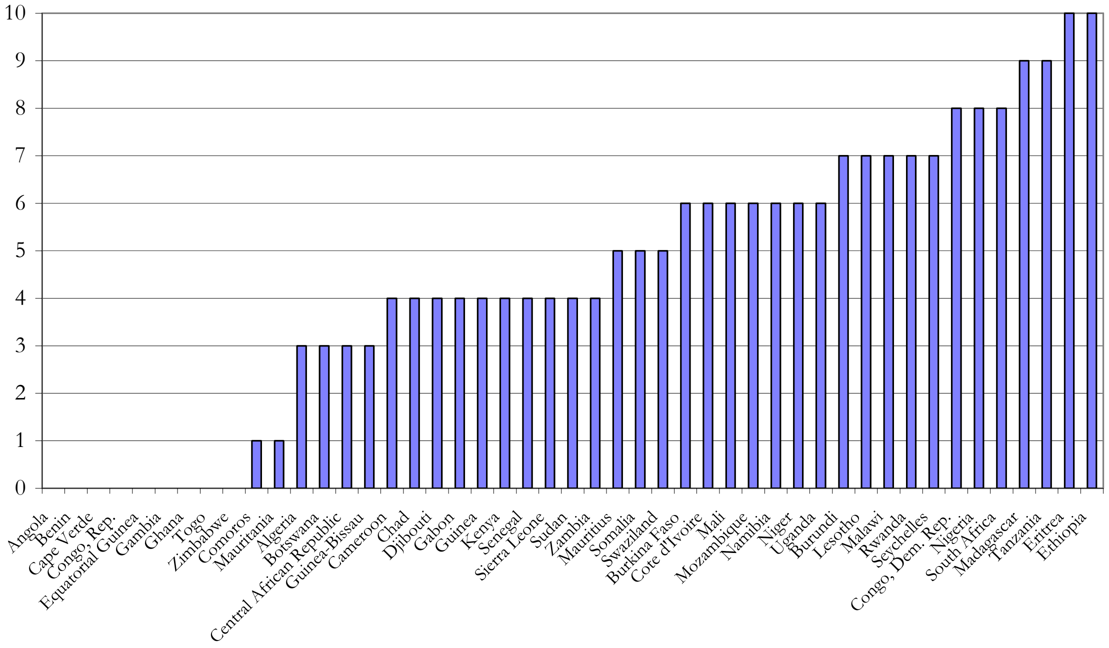
[9] Data supporting this coding can be found in Appendix A of Albaugh 2005: http://www.duke.edu/~eaa2/DissertationAppendixA.pdf

FIGURE 2

Level of Local Language Use in Education 2003, All Africa



Clearly, the use of local languages in education has increased over time. Scholars familiar with African colonial history quickly will note that virtually all of those countries using local languages at independence were former British colonies. It is customary to point out the differences in ruling practices between France and Britain in Africa. While scholars have challenged the neat dichotomy in recent years, a stark distinction does hold true in the two colonizers' approaches to education. British colonial educational policy favored initial teaching in the medium of the vernacular and then a switch to English-only in the later primary grades. French administrators insisted on the French language as medium from the outset of schooling.

As one would expect, this practice carried over to independence, with Anglophone countries continuing their inherited method of mother tongue education and Francophone countries preferring French-medium education. Figure 3 shows the distinction between former French and British colonies at independence.[10]

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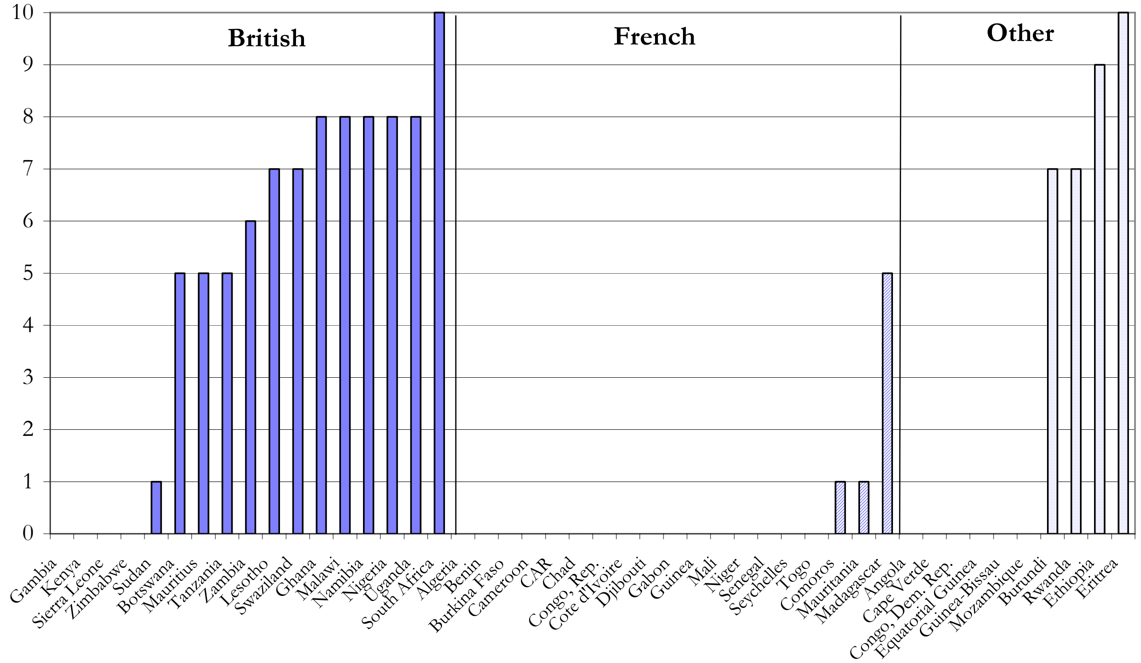
[10] Or 1960. Countries experiencing Belgian, Portuguese, Spanish or no colonization are grouped as "Other."

FIGURE 3

Local Language Use in Education at Independence



In former French colonies, only Madagascar was using an indigenous language (Malagasy) as an educational medium along with French,[11] while Mauritania and Comoros added to French some Classical Arabic.

Though some Francophone African countries experimented briefly with local languages in the interim,[12] the medium of instruction policies three decades after independence were remarkably stable. In its landmark 1988 report, *Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*, the World Bank devoted a few pages to assessing language medium in education in African countries. The Bank observed that of the 15 former British colonies in their sample, 13 of them (87%) were using one or more African languages in education (World Bank 1988, 44 and 154-156). Of the 15 former French colonies surveyed, only four were using one or more African languages in their primary education. As is evident in Figure 4, the weight of historical precedent continued until about 1990.

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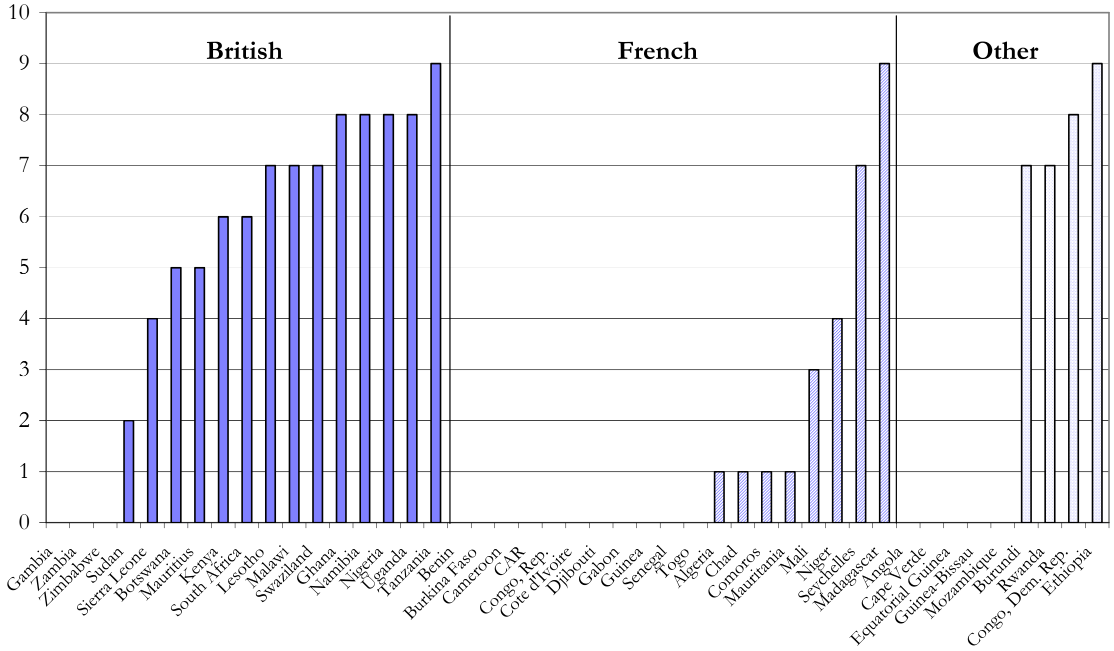
[11] Madagascar, like Seychelles, experienced a period of British rule, during which time the local language was used for literacy.

[12] Guinea is the most notable example.

FIGURE 4

Local Language Use in Education, 1990

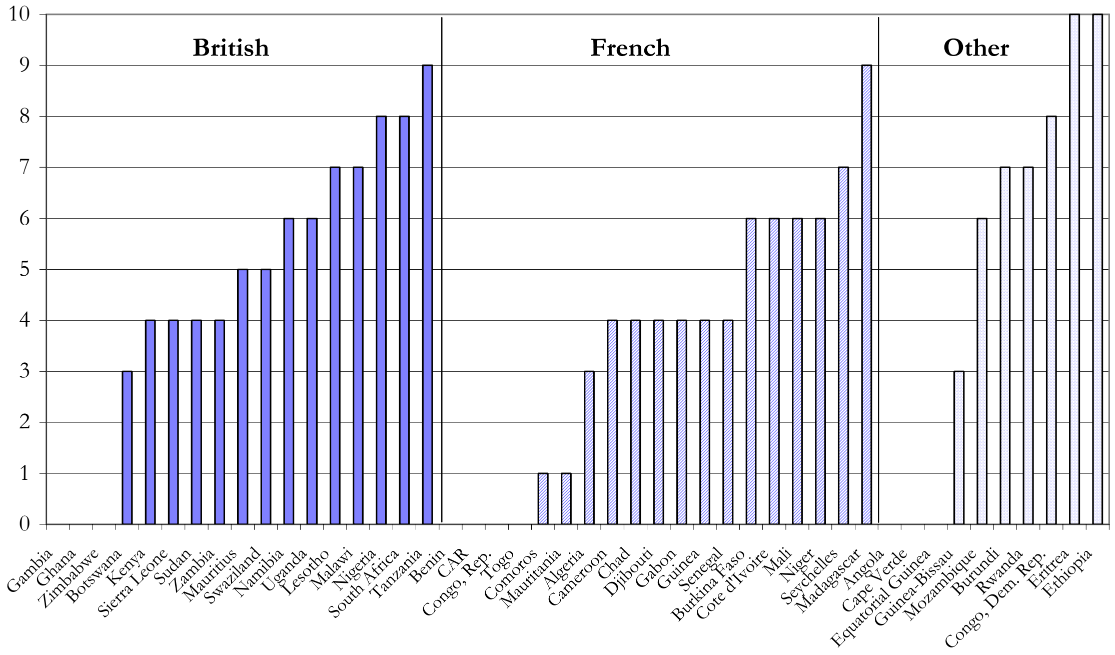


In 1990, Anglophone countries' use of local languages had changed little from independence. Only a few Francophone countries were experimenting with local languages by this date. Algeria, Chad, Comoros and Mauritania were simply using Classical Arabic along with French, which remained a foreign language for most pupils, and Seychelles and Madagascar are in a unique category, in that they had experienced both British and French rule and had some history of local language use before independence. Only Mali and Niger had by this date begun innovative, small-scale mother-tongue experimentation.

As depicted in Figure 5, the dramatic changes came after 1990, when 13 out of 19 former French colonies began or expanded local language use in their schools. Currently 74 percent of former French colonies are using local languages in education, compared with only one country doing so at independence.

FIGURE 5

Local Language Use in Education, 2003



This graph could point to a convergence toward high levels of local language use across the continent, which would be consistent with the theory that international norms of minority rights are stimulating mother tongue education everywhere. But when we look at the direction of changes from 1990 to the present (Figure 6), we see the overwhelming upward trend is unique to Francophone Africa,[13] and that, in contrast, Anglophone Africa is changing in both directions.

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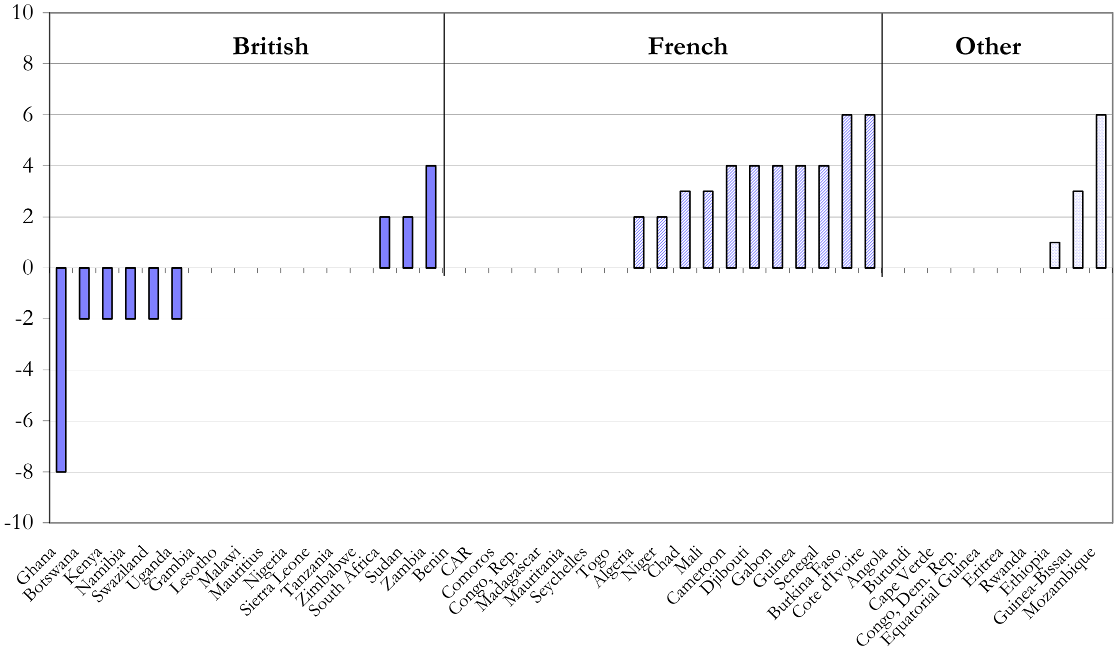
[13] Two states in the 'other' category – Portuguese colonies Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique – have also increased their use of local languages in education recently. They mirror the French colonies in the combination of a new discourse from the Lusophone equivalent to *la Francophonie*, and in the facilitating work of active language NGOs on the ground.

FIGURE 6

Change in Language Use in Education, 1990-2003



But what is the origin of these changes? The black box of the "French factor" must be opened. I will argue that these similar policy changes reflect the pull of confluent ideas within the French-speaking industrialized countries,[14] contrasted with indecisiveness within English-speaking industrialized countries[15] regarding language-use in education. The recent consensus in the Francophone world has led to a new and clear message communicated to the African countries in its sphere of influence, whereas the persistent divisions within the Anglophone community have resulted in a muted and ambivalent message conveyed to Anglophone Africa.

Though foreign powers no longer govern Africa as they did during the colonial period, vestiges of this dependent relationship have remained in several areas since independence, foremost among them language policy. The increasing attention to local languages in Francophone states does not sever the metropole-periphery relationship, but extends it. Policy diffusion results not from a tipping model that promises greater payoffs as more countries adopt a multilingual policy; nor does it arise from simple learning from success of other countries. It has its origin in a cultural connection between France and its former colonies.

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[14] Primarily France, Canada/Quebec, and Belgium.

[15] Primarily Britain and the US.

The crux of this thesis is a change of French policy-makers' causal ideas, and I argue that the carrier for the idea is a strategic scholarly community. Epistemic community scholars have long recognized the importance of crisis for stimulating a search for new sources of policy advice (Haas 1992, 352-54). This builds on the insights of the literature on agenda-setting in public policy, which asserts that crises provide opportunities for new solutions – solutions that may have long awaited their appropriate problems – to be considered (Walker 1977, Kingdon 1995, Horowitz 1989, Grindle and Thomas 1991). Historical institutionalists label these moments "critical junctures."

My story includes a crisis. It then departs from traditional accounts of epistemic communities by explicitly incorporating strategic agency. Ideas are not adopted as policy simply because they are good ideas. If these ideas are "floating" in the scientific community, why at a certain moment – aside from a crisis, which could be protracted – do policy makers suddenly believe them? The answer requires purposive action on the part of influence agents – tactical scholars – who persist in their scholarly advocacy, making their ideas accessible and appealing to the right policy makers. Though the epistemic community writers have neatly separated their scientific communities from interest groups, I propose that in contested social scientific domains, the lines cannot help but overlap. This is not because the academics are less committed to arriving at truth in my case, but because truth is not obvious. Framing therefore becomes crucial.

The dominant idea regarding language use in education in the Francophone world differs from that in the Anglophone world. That these contrasting voices exist allows us to see clearly an alternative context for the influence of an epistemic community. Rather than only in situations of international agreement between states, a scholarly community can be implicated in the continuation of intellectual dependency, in which a domestic policy bears the mark of external suggestion.

To establish a causal chain from scholarly community to policy outcome, I present the following evidence: First, I demonstrate that a scholarly community *existed* around the issue of language in education and it had links to relevant policymakers. Second, I reveal a *crisis*, which made these policymakers look for new solutions to a problem. Third, I show that *policies changed*, and I link this to the strategically framed ideas proposed by the scholarly community. Fourth, I provide evidence that the *causal ideas* of French policymakers actually changed. Finally, I link these changed ideas to changed policies in Francophone Africa. And I show that the same idea, without the context of a crisis and without similar framing, did not have the same effect on policy outcomes in Anglophone Africa.

A FRANCOPHONE COMMUNITY OF SCHOLARS

The entire story involves an idea as both an *effect* of a scholarly community's strategic action and a *cause* of changed policy. The idea is this: that education in a child's first language aids her acquisition of a second language. As will be shown, there is now consensus on this idea within the political leadership in the Francophone world, whereas in the Anglophone world, it continues to be the subject of contestation. The reason for this agreement can be traced to the strategic, well-positioned writing of a particular group of academics.

To set the stage, we must know a bit about the institutional links between the purported center of influence and its "periphery." Though France no longer controls education policy in its former colonies, its imprint and influence remain substantial. One way the connection has been maintained is through *la Francophonie*, a network of now 55 members, formed at the urging of African states in order to maintain their connection with France after decolonization in the 1960s.

La Francophonie began as an entity very separate from the French government – indeed, France did not originally favor the organization – but it has consistently grown closer to the apex of French foreign policy. The umbrella organization covering all agencies relating to *la Francophonie* is called the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), and France provides more than 60 percent of the overall budget.[16] The French President chairs the High Council of the OIF, and he chooses its other members. Headquartered in Paris, the Principal Operator of the OIF is the Intergovernmental Agency of the Francophonie (henceforth, the "Francophone Agency"),[17] which serves as the nerve-center of the organization. France provides 75 percent of the budget for the Francophone Agency.

The Francophone scholarly community in my story is a network of linguists from France, Canada, Belgium, and Francophone Africa. The community has influenced French policy makers through the multilateral Francophone Agency, described above. It also influences French bilateral foreign policy through France's governmental aid organization, the General Direction for International Cooperation and Development (henceforth, the "French Cooperation").[18] This aid agency is directed by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and funds a range of development initiatives, the majority in Africa.

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[16] Michel Vandepoorter, "Les contributions de la France à la Francophonie" (1 April 2005), email corres.

[17] Agence Intergouvernementale de la Francophonie (AIF), previously known as the Agence de Coopération Culturelle et Technique (ACCT). Because I will be discussing it at different periods, I will refer to it uniformly as the "Francophone Agency."

[18] Direction Générale de la Coopération Internationale et du Développement (DGCID). The shorthand parallels the French practice of referring to DGCID as "la Coopération Française."

Concerted activity by the community began in 1987. In that year, Robert Chaudenson, a French linguist who had specialized in Creole languages, answered a call for research from the French Cooperation. He proposed a research project looking at the relationship between African languages and development, and received the funding to inaugurate a multi-year collaborative project, LAFDEF.[19] This funding from the French Cooperation linked Chaudenson's research directly to the bureaucrats responsible for implementing French foreign policy in Africa. The next year, Chaudenson was elected Secretary of an existing language research body attached to the Francophone Agency, CIRELFA.[20] Chaudenson's position at the helm of CIRELFA gave him an official link to the Francophone Agency, France's most important multilateral arm. In 1989, Chaudenson proposed folding his LAFDEF into the more institutionalized CIRELFA, and the center of the scholarly community was born. There were 49 researchers at that time: 34 of them came from 13 African countries and 15 came from France, Belgium and Canada.[21] CIRELFA was thus in a prime position – at the nexus of French bilateral and multilateral cooperation in Africa – to influence the opinion of Francophone policy makers.

The linguists in this community were inspired by a variety of motivations. Most cared genuinely about the languages they studied. Understandably, the native French speakers also cared deeply about the preservation of French.[22] They shared a major principled belief: Languages in the world, and French in particular, should be protected from domination by English. Through their research, they grew to share the causal beliefs that 1) children learn best in their first language, and 2) children learn a *second* language better if they begin in their first language. These were not new causal beliefs;[23] the new element would be their packaging.

This community of experts found a niche in a previously underutilized research arm of *la Francophonie*. From here, it produced several writings in quick succession, "bombarding" Northern

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[19] Langues Africaines, Français et Développement

[20] Centre International de Recherche et d'Etude en Linguistique Fondamentale et Appliquée. Funded from 1981, CIRELFA was originally a Quebecois initiative and was based in Canada until 1988. According to Ntole Kazadi, long-time official of the Francophone Agency, CIRELFA did indeed give the Francophone Agency its intellectual support. The Francophone Agency financed CIRELFA and used it for information, but the body was independent. Ntole Kazadi, interview by author, 13 May 2004, Paris.

[21] Members are named in Chaudenson 2000*,* 285.

[22] I thank Raymond Lallez for his generous reading of an early draft of this chapter and for his caution that I may be obscuring much of the nuance in these scholars' positions by distilling their goals to only the preservation of French. I take this admonition seriously, and I want to emphasize that these linguists certainly have a variety of motivations. Their uniqueness is in the strategic packaging of their message for consumption by Northern Francophone leaders.

[23] They had been advocated in the 1950s by Léopold Senghor, and later by several French scholars: Houis and Bole-Richard 1977, Dumont 1983, Renard and Peraya 1985.

Francophone leadership with critiques of its inaction on matters of language in education. The unusual aspect of this community of scholars was the prominence of a particularly activist French academic, Robert Chaudenson. He and a colleague, Louis-Jean Calvet, when asked how they viewed their vocation, said they saw it as political, and their audience primarily as political leaders.[24] Here is the strategic agency that cannot be downplayed in any study of the role of ideas

Because of a mounting crisis of French, these critiques and suggestions found a more ready audience than in years past, and resulted in changed French rhetoric, followed steadily by changed French action.

CRISIS: THE ENGLISH PERIL

French linguist and historian Claude Hagège cites the Treaty of Versailles (1919), translated into both French and English rather than only French, as the moment the French language began its retreat (Hagège 1996, 89). France faced a new need to defend its language. By 1965, Charles de Gaulle had established the "High Committee for the Defense and the Expansion of the French Language." In 1975, the French government passed the Loi Bas-Lauriol, stipulating that French must be used in all commercial transactions – publicity, instructions, advertising – and terminology commissions arose to find words for these activities if necessary. Yet English continued to creep into French communication. In 1992, France amended its Constitution to state that the official language of the Republic was French, a clarification that had not previously seemed necessary (Hagège 1996, 162).[25]

In recent years, France has notoriously resisted what it considers *American* globalization, even translating the term into "mondialisation," instead of the anglicized "globalisation."[26] In their view, the ultimate result is a homogenization of culture, as English language and American culture dominate all others.

Three events marked France's reaction to the severity of the threat. First were the GATT negotiations between 1988 and 1993, specifically as they related to trade in culture (Frau-Meigs 2002). As the United States pushed for free trade in all areas, France and her allies fought to keep culture – represented by books, films, theater – exempt from the leveling forces of liberalization: the "cultural exception." According to *la Francophonie*'s report of the year 1993, "The cultural exception represents the fight of the French or European David against the American Goliath" (Haut Conseil de la Francophonie 1994, 55). The second event was the Toubon Law. Introduced by Jacques Toubon, then French Minister of Culture and la Francophonie, in August 1994, this law was an attempt to keep Anglicisms out of French spoken and written communication. It demonstrated France's heightened perception of the English threat and its official goal of maintaining its own linguistic purity. The third event was the body of discussions concerning languages of the European Union in 1995 and 1996.[27] France pushed for "obligatory plurilingualism" in Europe: mother tongue plus two foreign languages. The rationale was that if only one foreign language were required, people would undoubtedly choose English, and French would be threatened even more.

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[24] Chaudenson, interview by author, 23 April 2004, Marseille; Calvet, phone interview by author, 12 May 2004.

[25] Wright provides a good overview in 2004, 122-125.

[26] The biennial publication of the Francophonie for 2002-2003 titles its first section: "La Francophonie: une autre mondialisation" (Francophonie: a different globalization). Conseil Consultatif de l'OIF 2003, 5.

The outcome of all of these events was that France clarified its strategy for advancing the French language against English: promote all European languages apart from English. This conveniently allowed France to identify itself with an "international ethic" of diversity.

But how did this relate to African languages, which had always been subordinate to French? Africa contains 75% of Francophones (real, occasional and potential) in the world (Haut Conseil de la Francophonie 1990).[28] Yet in 1985, only an estimated 19 percent of Africans were literate in French, and by 1994 the figure had fallen to 14 percent (Haut Conseil de la Francophonie 1994, 95). If France wants to ensure that this vast reservoir of people continues to look to the "metropole" for linguistic and cultural products (textbooks, pleasure books, cinema, theater, radio, television), it simultaneously has to ensure better French language acquisition and protect against the invasion of the competitor, English. But it concerns more than economic gains. It is about French survival. If the French language had to rely only on France, Belgium, Switzerland and Quebec to maintain its stature, it would be dwarfed by neighbors and have no claim to world prominence. Francophone Africa is the means to continued French global influence.[29] Happily, Francophone academics had a solution. Promoting African languages did not compete with French, they promised. In fact, when children began education in their mother tongue, transition to a second language is made easier. This was the key that reconciled France's multilingual rhetoric with its desire to save French.

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[27] France did not sign the Council of Europe's Charter for Minority Languages until 1999, and still has not ratified it, being blocked constitutionally by the 1992 amendment enshrining French as the language of the Republic.

[28] [chk]. This may be an overstatement; I calculate 60%.

[29] See Chafer 2002 for an insightful analysis of the explicit cultural motives of French imperialism.

CHANGED POLICY: DISCOURSE AND ACTION

Prior to the 1990s, in the absence of a strategic scholarly community, the Francophone Agency sponsored numerous African language description projects in the name of cultural preservation, but there was no link to a concurrent goal of furthering French. These half-hearted programs were perceived rightly by African linguists as appeasement. With the arrival of the strategic scholarly community, one can discern a shift in the discourse of policy documents: from language study to preserve culture toward language study for its practical benefits to French.

The French justified their early lack of attention to African languages by blaming African governments for foot-dragging (AIF 2001, 115). I would argue these supposedly reluctant African governments were simply pragmatic. Their strategic preferences were heavily induced by the institutional possibilities. They knew that France – by far their largest donor[30] – was unconvinced of the utility of African languages at this time. There was no point in making major changes to their education systems when they could little afford such innovation and knew they would get no support from France.

Francophone discourse changed in 1989. After two Francophonie Summits held in the North (Paris and Quebec), the Francophone heads of state assembled in Dakar, Senegal for their Biennial Summit. In preparation, conference organizer Christian Valantin convened an expert session on languages and education, soliciting input from academics. Among them were members of the scholarly community, who thereby contributed greatly to the conference's contents. Robert Chaudenson hastily prepared a provocative book *1989: Toward a Francophone Revolution?* to be distributed to all participants at the Summit (Chaudenson 1989, Preface). In it, he drew a parallel between the French Revolution of 1789 and the present moment of revolution within the French-speaking world. If the original French Revolution involved a crisis of language, and ended with the French language triumphing over other "patois," the present crisis of French, in contrast, actually *depended* on minority language for its resolution. He wrote in colorful, non-technical language: "If you throw 100 babies in a pool, it is likely that a few of them will find a way out and escape drowning … but one doesn't deduce, in general, that this is the best way to teach them to swim," referring to the method of teaching children French from the beginning of primary school (Chaudenson 1989, 154).

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[30] Since 1960, between half and two-thirds of French bilateral development aid has gone to its former colonies in Africa. Chafer 2002, 12. Within French-speaking Africa, France was the top overall donor in virtually *every* country until very recently, giving more than the World Bank, the EC, or the US each year. OECD, *International Development Statistics* (IDS) online: http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/50/17/5037721.htm.

The Summit was a climactic event and inspired optimism on the part of those who believed in the use of African languages in education. It focused specifically on African languages, and produced a Decennial Plan for Linguistic Management, which talked about French and African languages in terms of "functional complementarity" for the first time (Actes du Sommet de Dakar 1989, 203). The conference was particularly clear on the link between mother tongue learning and second language acquisition:

> We now recognize the inadequacy, in the context of French as a second language, of the methods conceived for the teaching of French, a foreign language, as those inspired from French as a mother tongue. … One who does not master his mother tongue encounters difficulties with a second language….(Ibid., 214).

The Francophone Agency (with the participation of its most influential member, France), was finally demonstrating some real political will. The salutatory gestures toward cultural preservation through funding endless research gave way to a realization by the Francophone Agency that partner languages were not only tolerable, but essential for the preservation of French.

Despite this rhetoric emanating from the conference, however, financial support for programs on African languages actually decreased in the following years. This was for two reasons: changed leadership and institutional reorganization. The new Secretary-General of the Francophone Agency, Canadian Jean-Louis Roy, elected just after the Dakar Summit apparently was not bound to the decisions taken at Dakar, and he decided to reorient the linguistic focus of the organization. He favored a project called "Language Industries" – a term encompassing a variety of activity around information technology. In the reorganization, much of the financial responsibility for language research was transferred from the Francophone Agency to another "operator" of the OIF, the Association of Francophone Universities (AUPELF), also based in Canada.[31] The only element of language research left untouched was CIRELFA. Paradoxically, this deficit of official activity provided the opening for CIRELFA to gain greater visibility with its critical writings.

For the 1991 Francophonie Summit in Chaillot, CIRELFA prepared a second book under the direction of Chaudenson (Chaudenson 1991). It was the result of the scholars' collaborative work on a "grille d'analyse" (analytic grid). This "grille" could be presented graphically, and it showed the radical inconsistency between official status and actual use of French in most of Francophone Africa. With this evidence, France could see clearly the reality of its failure in Africa. The book's conclusion makes transparent its goal:

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[31] Its current acronym is AUF (Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie).

> Political decision makers …rarely have the time to read a 200-page book; it is thus imperative, if one wants a chance to be heard, to present them with such realities in a more concise and striking form. This grid permits the presentation, in just one page, and thus the inclusion in just one glance, of all the actual situations of French in the entire Francophone sphere (Chaudenson 1991, 191).

Between 1988 and 2000, CIRELFA published more than 30 books and disseminated a triennial bulletin to policymakers.[32] These continued to show, theoretically and through case studies, the weakness of French proficiency in Africa and the paradoxical necessity of local languages for the preservation of French. The framing connected the proposed solution to broader French goals and, importantly, it magnified the crisis.[33] Louis-Jean Calvet (1993, 490) stated starkly:

> Currently only about 10% of Francophone Africa speaks French, and many have recognized quickly that if this rate continues, the international position of French will be changed dramatically. The future of French is linked to that of African languages… Without a linguistic policy playing on this complementarity, there will not be a future for French…

More hyperbolically, Chaudenson warned that "French may be wiped out of Africa in 30 years, maybe less. Five percent of Africans speak French, essentially the elite. If we lose Africa, French becomes a non-factor" (Nadeau 1999, 7). These linguists highlighted the feebleness of French in Africa and made a commonsensical argument about pedagogy – children are not learning because they cannot understand the teacher. The use of African languages resolved both problems.

It was important that Chaudenson had his foot in both avenues of French influence. He could funnel his opinions both to the Francophone Agency and to the French Cooperation at the same time. Furthermore, because AUPELF was not interested for the moment in languages and education, Chaudenson had a virtual monopoly to set the tone and direction of the research. The budget for CIRELFA was relatively small, compared to the funding given to prior language projects – about $150,000 annually. But this funded research and publication of at least two books per year. These were coordinated, pointed projects, and instead of being relegated to the shelves of academics, the work was intentionally distributed to policy-makers. CIRELFA's advising role became more and more important.

The radical message preached by the strategic scholarly community – that *French* was in trouble and had to be rescued by national languages – was simply a repackaged version of linguistic research that had been circulating for a long time. Yet until about 1989, with the concerted, politically aimed writings of the strategic scholarly community, "it never entered anyone's mind to engage in reflection about the specific problems posed by the use of French as medium of education for students who used other languages when they arrived at school" (AIF 2001, 129). A Francophone African linguist observes that there is now virtual consensus on the idea that children learn writing best in a language they use outside school (Tréfault 2001, 227-28). Explicitly citing the Francophone Agency and the French Cooperation, he observes that "rare are the voices that dare to go against the current of this dominant discourse"(Ibid., 228).

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[32] *Langues et Developpement*, first published in 1988, was intended to provide quick information to policy makers. The book series, under the same title, was supposed to permit the "visibility and diffusion" of the best results of the program. AIF 2001, 121.

[33] Weingast (2005: 170) elaborates the microfoundations of critical junctures, in which proponents of a new idea find it rational to try to scare decision makers by exaggerating potential negative consequences.

Thus, even with this lack of concrete action immediately following the Dakar Summit, the changed message emanating from the "Northern" members of *la Francophonie* after 1989 was heard loudly in Africa. In the 1990s, we see the start or expansion of several local language education initiatives in Francophone Africa, which would not have been attempted in the decades before.

The Francophone Organization (OIF) has recently declared itself at the "center of a crusade in favor of plurilingualism" (Haut Conseil de la Francophonie 2001, 59). The transformation is evident in its regular report, *Etat de la Francophonie dans le monde*. The 1987 report contained no mention of African languages at all. In 1993, the publication recognized the importance of African "partner languages," and dedicated several paragraphs to the need for "complementarity" between these languages and French. The publication in 1997 demonstrated the most dramatic change, devoting an entire section to the benefits to French of schooling in the mother tongue, and subsequent publications continue to reinforce this changed strategy.

After the disappointing lull in activity following the rhetoric of the Dakar Summit, the 1997 Hanoi Summit represented the "decisive shift" toward real support of African languages in the eyes of experts (Renard 2002, 8). Connecting the crisis of French to globalization, the Hué Charter included the following statement:

> Globalization is not beneficial for all. It is built on a general marketization that erases identities and imperils the existence of all languages…the francophone movement confronts this challenge in proposing another way of thinking about the world…French can be a vector of hope…by making alliance, notably as a second language, with all of the languages in her bosom... (Charte de Hué, 1)

Demonstrating a changed understanding of the relationship between languages and education, in 1997 the Francophone Agency attached CIRELFA, which had previously been affiliated with the Office of Culture in the Francophone Agency, to the Office of *Education and Training*. African languages were now viewed as a route to educational improvement, rather than a tool of cultural preservation.

Then, in January 1999, the Francophone Agency created for the first time an Office of Languages and Writing. This Office sits at the heart of the Francophone Agency. Robert Chaudenson is now a permanent consultant to this office in his capacity as director of the ongoing series *Languages and Development*.

Importantly, the Francophone Agency's strategy document states clearly that it expects to see education plans in Africa that include national languages:

> The Agency will from now on concentrate on partner languages in states which, having chosen French as an official language […], encounter a critical problem of education for populations whose mother tongue is not French.
>
> Significant support will thus be given to countries that have chosen teaching in certain national languages in the first years of study, following the principles of convergent pedagogy, for which the effectiveness in the subsequent mastery of French has been demonstrated (AIF 2000, 10-11).

"Convergent pedagogy" refers explicitly to the method of teaching French through local languages advocated by members of the scholarly community (Wambach 1994, Poth 1997). The Francophone Agency links its interventions to preexisting elaboration of national language policies by member states themselves. What may appear an independent decision on the part of African governments to implement a program that includes local languages in education is more likely an anticipation of significant support from the Francophone Agency.

Though France provides the majority of the budget the Francophone Agency, the amount it spends multilaterally is only a small fraction of its bilateral spending on Africa. Similar rhetoric in support of mother tongue education is evident in program documents of the bilateral French Cooperation. The Program document for 2002 devotes a special section to partner languages (Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, n.d.). Since most bilateral funding is now sectoral (e.g. given to the education sector as a whole, rather than for individual projects), it is difficult to measure the amount contributed for language components of overall education plans. But the education strategies of virtually all Francophone African countries currently contain a mother tongue element, and France supports them through sectoral financing.

The relationship between French and African languages has been described as evolving from "apartheid to partnership."[34] In an astounding shift from colonial and much post-colonial policy, the French language has been transformed from assimilator to liberator. An African member of the Francophone Association of Universities observes: "Particularly in Africa, French and national languages are linked by a common destiny. The revalorization of national languages, of African culture, passes through French, which, purged of its mark of domination, has become the language of revolt and of liberty."[35] French now promises to free Africa (and the rest of the world) from the homogeneity threatened by the English language. This was not a straight and natural trajectory; it is a sea-change, and the strategic scholarly community propelled the current.

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[34] The title and imagery used by Renard in his chapter for Chaudenson and Calvet's edited volume, 2001.

CHANGED CAUSAL IDEAS

We have seen that discourse has changed regarding the utility of mother tongues in education – the Francophone Agency created a specialized office to manage this new priority, and funding was promised from both the Francophone Agency and the French Cooperation to support mother tongue projects. A group of scholars had a new idea; a crisis existed; and policy changed that corresponded with the new idea. This is usually the extent of evidence provided to show the link between a scholarly community and a policy outcome. But we need to demonstrate the direct link between the scholars and the policymakers' causal ideas. To show the specific influence of the scholarly community, we need to find pointed evidence, such as contact between members of the scholarly community and French leadership, confirmation that the writing of scholarly community members circulated in government circles, and reference to the ideas of these academics in conversation with policy-makers.

To find such evidence, I conducted 25 interviews in France among leaders of multilateral Francophone agencies and French government officials,[36] as well as with members of the strategic scholarly community and other NGOs. Remarkably, I found a uniform response to the question, "What language do you think should be used for primary education in Africa?" *All* agency respondents – French government officials, as well as officials of *la Francophonie* – answered that African languages should be used in primary schools. This is a dramatic consensus. And it contradicts opinions of French officials a generation earlier. Brian Weinstein, probably the first to study *la Francophonie* on a comparative scale (Weinstein 1976), was kind enough to loan me his field notes from 1972-73. He had traveled to several member countries of *la Francophonie*, interviewing Northern and Southern leaders about their views on this new international entity. His notes reveal the views of French elites and government officials toward local languages in the 1970s, with which I could establish a baseline for comparison.

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[35] Aloyse-Raymond Ndiaye, cited in Renard 2002, 11.

[36] Agence Intergouvernementale de la Francophonie, Haut Conseil de la Francophonie, Direction Générale de la Coopération et du Développement, Direction Générale de la Langue Française; Agence Parlementaire de la Francophonie.

The French Ambassador to Haiti at that time, Bernard Dorin, illustrated official French opinion. It was a matter of course that French should be the language of instruction from the beginning of school. To the idea that Haiti's government was considering making local Creole even a subject in school, he worried: "If that is done, it will be a threat to French." Dorin emphasized his concern that French remain and expand as a 'langue maternelle'.[37] One French academic interviewed by Weinstein believed that French was a factor of unity in African countries and would "eventually eliminate African languages to become [a] 'mother tongue'"[38] Another suggested that the "great danger was that some [African] governments wanted to cut their elites off from the outside world and were doing so by insisting on the teaching of the African languages in schools."[39] These interviews show the prevailing opinion of French officials and elites regarding African languages: they were a threat to French and should be discouraged.

But 30 years later, this sentiment had changed dramatically. One of the most forceful advocates for the use of local languages was a former French Ambassador and current Head of the French Government's Service de la Francophonie, Michel Vandepoorter. With no prompting, he asserted the imperative that African languages be used in school; one of the main reasons was easier subsequent French acquisition. When I asked whether there were any "pockets of resistance" within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he answered, "It isn't even debated. It is intuitive. It is part of France's larger goal toward diversity."[40]

The direct link to the scholarly community surfaced when I asked why. All but one of the agency members I interviewed offered the rationale that easier French acquisition was the main reason African languages should be used in schools. That is, children will learn French better if they begin in their first language. This is not a self-evident relationship, and it demonstrates exposure to the writing and advocacy of the scholarly community. All agency respondents thought that within their agency, opinion on this issue had changed over time. Most were able to date the change to a precise moment in time: eight placed it between 1990 and 2000.

At the heart of my purpose, when asked the cause of this change, nine out of 14 attributed it to the scholars of the academic community directly by name, another referred to "scholars in the Agency," which likely was a reference to Chaudenson and CIRELFA, and two more attributed it to specific ideas given by the scholars but could not name them. Thus 12 out of 14, or 85 percent, of the agency officials acknowledged that the ideas of this group of scholars had influenced the ideological climate of their agency. In all cases, the respondent communicated the idea first, and then, when asked to consider its origin, pointed to members of the scholarly community. That policymakers do not refer initially to the academics indicates that they have absorbed the causal idea, rather than using the community to legitimate the policies they want to pursue.

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[37] Bernard Dorin, interview with Brian Weinstein, 17 Aug 1972, Port-au-Prince, Haiti.
[38] André Reboullet, interview with Brian Weinstein, 3 Nov 1972, Paris.
[39] Robert Cournevin, interview with Brian Weinstein, 6 Nov 1972, Paris.
[40] Michel Vandepoorter, interview by author, 26 April 2004, Paris.

Not surprisingly, the four members of what I am calling the strategic scholarly community that I interviewed were in agreement about the utility of African languages in education. When I asked if they thought they themselves had influenced policy change, three out of four (Calvet, Wambach, Renard) said they believed they had; Chaudenson (who I would argue has been the most politically agitating) said he did not think he had had much effect. He has been the most pessimistic and critical of Francophone Agency and French government action, so this may be simply a refusal to relent in his barrage, for fear the positive changes will slow.

These academics were not simply reflecting, but vigorously pushing their agenda in high political circles. When I asked Calvet if he thought politicians were more open to his thoughts now, he said, "I don't think so. I know so." How did he know? "Because I am invited to be an expert speaker at policy-making conferences, and contacted routinely for expert opinion."[41] Anecdotally, in at least four of my interviews with French officials, when I asked who or what had changed opinion within their agencies, they pointed to a stack of papers on their desk or gestured toward their computers, explaining that they had just received another emailed "Note" from Chaudenson, apparently a very common occurrence.

When compared with the baseline provided by Weinstein's interviews, which revealed the overall negative opinions held by French elites about the utility of African languages, the current consensus is astounding. My own interviews point convincingly to the primary role played by influence agents in the process of this ideational transformation.

CONTRAST WITH THE "ANGLOPHONIE"

The graphs presented at the outset pointed to differing policy outcomes in the two groups of African states. To further support the argument, I contrast the ideational process in Francophone Africa with that in Anglophone. This distinction highlights further the necessity of crisis and framing for an idea's policy impact.

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[41] The 2002-2003 version of *La Francophonie dans le Monde*, the biennial publication of the Francophonie, uses long extracts from Calvet and Chaudenson: Conseil Consultatif 2003, 77, 85.

Anglophone Africa is subject to a variety of influences. Often likened to *la Francophonie,* the Commonwealth is a grouping of 53 countries with past or present links to the United Kingdom. In contrast to *la Francophonie*, however, the Commonwealth is a loose, independent entity. Moreover, because a large portion of linguistic research written in English comes from the United States (a notable exclusion from the list of Commonwealth members), one must consider all English-language research when looking at the differential impacts of ideas on Anglophone organizations and states.

While some scholarship coming out of Francophone circles mentions selected English-language works, Anglophone scholarship rarely mentions Francophone publications.[42] Anglophone research in the area of language policy, then, is not "contaminated" at all by Francophone linguistic research, which makes comparisons neater. Unlike the Francophone case, there is no coherent academic community with shared beliefs about language-use in education. Instead, there are two very distinct and sharply divided groups, particularly evident in the United States. On one side, there are those bilingual education theorists who favor using mother tongues as the basis for education (Collier 1987, Cummins 1979, 1991, Ramirez *et al.* 1991, Krashen 1996, August and Hakuta 1997, Greene 1998). On the other side are those who oppose mother tongue use in favor of structured immersion programs (Baker and de Kanter 1981, Porter 1990, Rossell and Baker 1996, Glenn 1997).

One significant finding in my research was that the message of Anglophone scholars who favor the use of mother tongues has merged with that of transnational advocates of human language rights (Tollefson 2002, Skutnabb-Kangas 2000, Phillipson 1992, 2000, de Varennes 1996, Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas 1999). Language rights scholars label their enterprise "critical linguistics," and understand it to entail social activism (Tollefson 2002, 4). They point to the inequalities that inevitably arise and are sustained when elites guard their advantage in language. These critical theorists see in a country' medium of instruction "the most powerful means of maintaining and revitalizing a language and culture" and "a key means of power (re)distribution and social (re)construction" (Tollefson and Tsui 2004, 2).

In Anglophone scholarship on language and education, then, researchers are divided, and those who advocate mother tongue education are identified with the radical messages that criticize English linguistic hegemony. This is not an attractive frame.

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[42] An annotated bibliography prepared for USAID's IEQ project on language and education does not list one French-language book or article, though it purports to cover language in education policy throughout Africa. Similarly, Tove Skutnabb-Kangas's 174-page bibliography of multilingualism and linguistic human rights does not list any of the Francophone authors in the scholarly community. But see Fardon & Furniss 1994.

The divergent recommendations and polemical writing emanating from English-language sources have created a very indecisive climate of action regarding mother tongue education. Unlike *la Francophonie*, which entered the 1990s with a common policy on local languages, the Anglophone world shares no such consensus. This is evident in statements from the Commonwealth itself, in British bilateral policies, and in policies of the Anglophone-oriented World Bank.

Replicating my research on the Francophone side, I checked written declarations of the Commonwealth and the British counterpart to the French Cooperation: its Department for International Development (DFID) and complemented this documentary evidence with several interviews.

The Singapore Declaration of Commonwealth Principles (1971) contains no discussion of languages, except to observe that the Commonwealth includes people from different "races, languages and religions."[43] Neither the Harare Commonwealth Declaration, nor the Millbrook Commonwealth Action Programme on the Harare Declaration (1995) mention language at all, save to note a shared English language.[44] These three statements are considered the foundation of Commonwealth policy, and none even remotely touches the language issue.

Though the quality of English in Africa is generally considered very poor, a careful reading of the biennial Reports of the Commonwealth Secretariat reveals no mention in any of them of language as an area of activity or concern. Unlike the *Etat de la Francophonie* publications in the 1990s, the Commonwealth Reports do not expend any ink assessing numbers of English speakers, language teaching methods, or language policies in member states. The Conference of Education Ministers' Halifax Communiqué recognized the need to address the subject of indigenous languages versus English in education but made no attempt to formulate a Commonwealth policy. [45]

This silence on the language-in-education issue was corroborated by my interviews. I spoke with current and former directors of education in the Commonwealth, the Secretary for the Commonwealth's Consortium for Education, officials at the British Council, and former and current Chief Education Officers at DFID.[46] All of them expressed reluctance to take a firm stand on a policy about language use in education, saying it was an issue for individual states to decide.

Part of this ambivalence on the part of Britain and other Commonwealth members, emerges from the peculiar history of South Africa and the legacy of apartheid that separated groups by language. Regardless of the pedagogical attributes of mother tongue education, it is tinged with the racism of apartheid and cannot escape this connotation as easily as the "newly discovered" mother tongue language option in Francophone Africa (Kashoki, 2003).

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[43] *Declaration of Commonwealth Principles*, "Who We Are/Key Declarations."

[44] Harare Commonwealth Declaration, Paragraph 3.

[45] Halifax Communiqué, paragraph 9.

[46] Interviews reported in Albaugh 2007.

Finally, if we discuss external influences on African countries, we must include the World Bank. This agency has been relatively silent on the issue of languages as well. The only explicit policy statement emerging from the World Bank came in a study by Nadine Dutcher (1982), who, after surveying several experimental programs came to the conclusion that early mother tongue education was a good idea. Yet, after her recommendation, there has been a steady resistance to take a firm position on this sensitive issue.[47] Ali Mazrui (1997) goes so far as to accuse the Bank of destroying the future of African languages in education.

Messages to Africa from the Anglophone world about language in education are mixed: US voices are divided, Britain's message is ambivalent, and the World Bank has notoriously vacillated in its policy prescriptions. The Francophone scholarly community differs markedly in its consensus and its strategic framing. The human rights element has not overshadowed the education focus in their writing, and the literature has not taken on the polemical tone that much of the Anglophone scholarship has adopted. In fact, the pitch has lowered from the earlier writing, and the authors arresting the attention of French policy-makers have focused more on the pragmatic elements of local language use for development purposes and second language acquisition. These linguists present their interest in language not for its own sake, but as an instrument – of development, of education, and of French expansion.

An epistemic community usually emerges in the natural sciences on issues such as environment. Because this is a *social* scientific issue, it is not surprising that scholarly opinions are fragmented. The remarkable phenomenon is the cohesiveness of the Francophone linguistic research community. There are two reasons for this: framing and context. Francophone scholars have packaged their advice to policy-makers as a means of bolstering French linguistic aspirations. Rather than challenging the ultimate aim of French language expansion, they provide an alternate means of arriving at this goal. A side benefit is the preservation of African languages, but these languages do not compete with French for ultimate dominance. In contrast, the English-speaking academic communities advocating multilingual education have merged with linguistic rights activists, who preach a radical, uncompromising message about the inherent right of all to their respective languages. Challenging English hegemony forms the basis of this critique, a message unpalatable to most Anglophone policy makers.

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[47] Brock-Utne 2001, 122 reports a conversation with a World Bank official in Niger, who told her that the World Bank "never involved itself in decisions that had to do with the choice of language of instruction."

A lack of compelling frame may reflect a different crisis. The disappearance of tiny languages or poor academic performance does not galvanize the same response as the potential reduction of a once-dominant power's cultural influence worldwide. Thus, an important difference is the global linguistic setting and its impact on the sense of crisis perceived by each metropole. France is trying to reverse a global language decline, while Britain and the U.S. can simply ride the rising tide. This influences the urgency of their motivation to listen to the prescriptions for change offered by scholarly communities.

CAUSAL LINKAGES

The major portion of this paper focused on showing *how* ideas changed among policymakers in France. I contend that this altered idea influenced policy outcomes in Africa. To support this claim, I demonstrated how the new idea was communicated generally from *La Francophonie* and the French Foreign Ministry to African states. But two additional steps are necessary to complete the causal chain. First, I need to show how the ideas were transmitted from French to African policymakers. Second, I need to show that African policymakers absorbed and actually used these ideas in their policy choices. This section will address these final links, but only superficially, for two reasons.

First, the final step is intertwined with a domestic process that is as intricate as the external. The preferences of African policymakers indeed have changed. This shift is a combination of a transformation in causal ideas and a shift in expectations of France's reaction. The first element is motivated by domestic actors – a group I have labeled elsewhere an evidentiary community (Albaugh 2007). These advocates, like the scholarly community in the case of France, worked strategically to persuade African policy makers of the same causal idea: that children will learn French better if they begin in their mother tongue. Having realized that cultural, rights-based arguments were ineffectual on pragmatic leaders, these domestic advocates – missionaries, language NGOs, and the local linguists affiliated with them – proposed to African leaders a new way for African school children to learn French. But African policymakers did not risk a policy change – as much as they were persuaded of its feasibility – until they perceived a permissive attitude from their ideological authority, France. Power can be defined as "a network of boundaries that delimit, for all, the field of what is socially possible" (Hayward 2000, 3). The changes in African education medium only occurred in the 1990s, after France communicated its new openness to policy experimentation. This is where the dependency arises.

This leads to the second reason the description is necessarily limited. I want to demonstrate that an idea diffused from French leadership to African policymakers. This is a sensitive area for research. A questioner must be aware of a power-play and a game of words happening between African leaders and France. Africans do not want to appear puppets, even while they complain of neocolonialism, and France does not want to appear the puppeteer. It is difficult, therefore, to get Africans to admit that France could communicate anything but support for French-only medium of education, and difficult to get French officials to admit they favor one policy over another. African governments like to appear to be overcoming French resistance, and French officials like to pretend that they take their directives solely from African governments. This double-talk serves both sides well – each can blame the other if African languages are not being promoted. Meanwhile, changes are indeed happening on the ground. A message of approval must be filtering in. Evidence for this section is admittedly sketchy – partly because honest answers are so difficult to ascertain.

The front lines for French policy in Africa are officials in the service for education and cultural cooperation in French embassies. Beyond general ideas communicated from *la Francophonie* and DGCID, one needs to know what specific messages are conveyed by French aid representatives in Africa. For this task, I sent a questionnaire to French aid representatives in African embassies. Only a few responded (and some had to be cajoled into actually admitting to a policy, rather than hiding behind the rhetoric of "we support the African government's policy"), but the answers generally confirmed my hypothesis. French officials in Africa seem to be transmitting the new idea from DGCID in Paris that local language education is helpful for the acquisition of French and should be promoted.

In Francophone Burkina Faso, for example, to my question, "What do you perceive is the French policy concerning medium of education in Burkina Faso's primary schools?" the technical advisor for education wrote in response:

> Various studies conducted around the world [support] the idea that it is easier to learn in one's first language, the learning of other language (French) being easier… I believe essentially that the current opinion of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is to use African languages at the beginning of education to transfer progressively toward French. I also believe this view, strongly backed by quality studies, is shared by African states and other partners...[48]

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[48] Didier Mazzoleni, Technical Advisor for non-formal education (Projet de Développement de l'Education de Base, PDEB), a project financed the French Cooperation, (4 March 2005), personal email.

The French technical advisor for Mali answered matter-of-factly: "France supports a reform program in the framework of PRODEC (Decennial Program in Education) which looks to install a bilingual education system, with the first years in national languages and a progressive introduction of French."[49] France has sent a technical advisor to assist in writing curriculum and to help manage the bilingual program.

In Senegal, the head of French cultural cooperation reported that he believed

> there is a favorable opinion at least at the level of Francophone leadership for the development of national languages…[This sentiment] is held by DGCID… I believe effectively on a technical level that initial literacy in a national language is a good thing; it favors the further passage to French and general academic success.

He added that the attitude in the French embassy is prudent, however, as they wait for Senegal to take the lead. We "do not want to appear at the forefront on this issue; we are observing the experiment and are ready to work on the problem of the passage from the national language to French…"[50]

This contrasts with the unwillingness of British officials to take a position at all. A conversation with Donald Taylor, Education Advisor at DFID in Ghana, for example, confirmed a lack of participation on this issue. He said that DFID is "not closely involved with anything to do with language policy" in Ghana, and as far as a policy from Britain, DFID has "no particularly strong line." Taylor had met with the Minister of Education but has not discussed the language policy. He has been in Ghana for a year, and during this time, at the monthly donor meetings, donors have not discussed language policy at all, to his recollection.[51]

The messages sent by Paris and London and by officials at the front lines of French and British policy appear consistent with my argument. How about the messages *received* in African Ministries of Education?

The evidence is clearest in Senegal. Mamadou Lamine Gassama, top advisor to the Minister of Education, when asked his perception of France's opinion about the use of local languages in school said it was certainly favorable. He had interacted with several French officials and found them to have a positive opinion about the project. Mamadou Ndoye, head of the language NGO at the forefront of Senegal's mother tongue effort and later Minister for Basic Education, reported that the French Foreign Ministry provided a technical advisor for the mother tongue language program and accepted the revisions to the curriculum with no problem.[52]

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[49] Bruno Maurer, Technical Assistant, "Réponses Mali," (12 April 2005), personal email.

[50] Alain Dhersigny, Chef du Bureau (SCAC), "Réponse Questionnaire" (7 May 2004) personal email.

[51] Donald Taylor, Education Advisor DFID Ghana, telephone interview by author, 22 April 05.

In Cameroon, the top technical advisor to the Minister of Education said that it was not France that was hindering the mother tongue policy; if there was any slowness in application, it was because a few officials in the ministry were trying to impede it.[53] The Inspector-General for Bilingual Education told me he did not perceive any resistance on the part of French officials about the idea of mother tongue education. "There is a misconception that they care only about French. I believe they understand that local languages do not compete with French."[54]

In contrast, Ghanaian Ministers (Anglophone), in response to a query about what they perceive donor messages to be, insist that this is beside the point. They are anxious to appear unconstrained by the influence of outsiders. Christine Churcher, Minister of Basic, Secondary, and Girl Child Education, when I asked whether she worried that Ghana may be giving up donor money by changing the policy (from local languages to English-only), insisted that it is "not for donors to tell us what to do."[55] Christopher Ameyaw Akumfi, former Minister of Education, answered, "The decision was taken at the Cabinet level…it is not proper for donors to dictate our policy…"[56]

I hypothesize that the changed French message has only penetrated the top levels of the education bureaucracy in Francophone Africa, because it is these officials who attend international Francophone conferences and interact directly with high French officials. Any support at the mid- and lower-levels has been cultivated from the "bottom up" – by the NGOs or individuals central to the domestic process of ideational change (Albaugh 2007).

Thus, both external and internal forces are working on African leaders at the same time – in the Francophone cases, a push from actors within the state and a pull from France, which is generally absent in their Anglophone counterparts. This article deals with the external force, but it had to be combined with concurrent domestic pressures to result in the changed outcome.

CONCLUSION

The policy changes provoking an upward trend in the use of local languages in education across Africa are surprising in two ways. They seem to defy conventional assumptions about the benefits of linguistic homogeneity in nation-building. They also challenge path-dependency expectations of policy inertia. The answer to both puzzles involves *ideas.* I attribute a large part of the explanation to a change of ideas within France, one of the continent's major colonizers. French policymakers ideas changed because of the persuasive efforts of a strategic scholarly community. And their ideas affected policies across Africa. Though the formal rule has ended, I argued that informal ties persist. France continues to affect policy outcomes by influencing the preferences of African policy makers.

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[52] Mamadou Ndoye, former Minister of Education, interview by author, 20 April 05. The technical assistant was Charles Delorme, education consultant from CEPEC de Lyon.

[53] 1st Technical Advisor to the Minister of Education, MINEDUC, interview by author, 28 Oct 02, Yaounde.

[54] Michael Nama, telephone interview by author, 20 April 05.

[55] Christine Churcher, interview by author, 17 April 03, Accra.

[56] Christopher Ameyaw Akumfi, interview by author, 24 April 03, Accra.

Much existing literature attributes the success of advocacy networks to their framing of an issue in human rights terms. This study argues that advocates of local language education purposely *avoided* framing it as a human rights issue in order to persuade policy makers of a new causal idea. The Francophone scholarly community understood the need for strategic packaging of its message. People, not simply information, convinced the French government that the crisis of French in Africa could be solved by a change in education strategies in the states within France's sphere of influence. The new strategy – use local languages as a means to learning French – appeared much more modest than the radical message of Anglophone linguistic rights activists, who posed rights to minority languages *against* English domination. The French still aspire to world power status and view the spread of their culture and civilization – epitomized in their language – as the way to assure this outcome. They have simply discovered, with the help of a strategic scholarly community, a new way to achieve their goal.

The study also analyzed the *effects* of ideas. Traditional works that focus on diffusion and the convergence of a single international idea miss the possibility that there may exist competing ideas affecting certain subsets of states. Francophone Africa hears that it is now acceptable to consider using African languages in education; Anglophone Africa hears a cacophony of contradictory advice. The lack of consensus gives Anglophone Africa more latitude for variance. That such a relationship between metropole and periphery still exists confronts us with the phenomenon of intellectual dependency.

More broadly, then, this project speaks to power, arguing that persuasion is a form of power. In this case, it can be viewed as subversive by those who resent continued domination of weaker states by stronger. It can also, however, be viewed as liberating, if seen as a means for domestic groups to exercise influence in less than democratic settings. If Africa's democratic deficit has been encouraged by ideological linkages to its former colonial power, domestic actors have learned how to capitalize on this, using persuasion instead of democratic bargaining to achieve their aims.

This new model shows how and when scholarly communities matter in domains that are more fluid than natural science, and in areas other than international cooperative agreements between states. In this case, they contribute to France's continued influence over domestic policy outcomes in Francophone Africa. Modern international society no longer accepts formal colonization. Ideational influence, however, can operate with little detection. French officials want to avoid the appearance of imposing their policies on Africans; African leaders want to appear autonomous. Therefore, we do not usually see how this influence works. This article has only sketched a rough outline; much is still hidden from view. The intellectual dependency of one state on another need not imply that actors within these states are passive, however. In fact, intellectuals within these countries can use France's altered rhetoric actively to press their governments to enact changes they have long advocated. A strategic scholarly community altered the ideas of a crucial actor, France, opening up the political space for change. Domestic actors filled it with a mother tongue program whose component parts had been incubating until the moment was ripe for their revelation.

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