

Policy development for English-medium instruction in French universities

Marianne Blattes

King's College London
marianne.blattes@kcl.ac.uk

Abstract

In July 2013, Article 2 of the Fioraso Law was passed legalising English-medium instruction (EMI) in French universities. This controversial measure immediately sparked passionate debates in the National Assembly and the media. While on the surface this announcement signifies a historical shift in French language policy, a closer analysis of the policy formation signals a more complex picture. In an attempt to understand policy not as a politico-linguistic object but as a process and site of struggle, this paper focuses on how the parliamentary debates have been recontextualised in the drafting process of the law. The aim is to highlight the sensitive issues and major topics surrounding the EMI debate and trace the textual transformations of the law. This study focuses on four different versions of the Fioraso Law and the parliamentary debates. Drawing on the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), the author examines the extent to which the parliamentary debates influenced and shaped the language policy text. An analysis of the multiple revisions of the policy reveals marked differences between the initial draft of 2012 and the final version in 2013. The amendments show that certain key issues from the parliamentary discussions have been taken into account, notably concerns about the perceived threat of EMI on Franco-phonie. However, the textual transformations indicate greater resistance towards EMI than was actually the case in the parliamentary debates.

Keywords: language policy, English-medium instruction, Fioraso law, policy creation, French higher education

1. Introduction

Over the past decade there has been a growing interest in the spread of English-medium instruction (henceforth EMI) at university level in traditionally non-Anglophone speaking European countries. The majority of studies have investigated teachers' (and to a lesser extent students') attitudes and beliefs towards EMI (Dimova et al. 2015; Doiz et al. 2013; Kuteeva and Airey 2014;

Tange 2010). While attitudes are complex and often ambivalent, on the whole many studies report positive attitudes towards EMI (Bolton and Kuteeva 2012; Costa and Coleman 2013; Jensen et al. 2009; Knapp 2011; Lasagabaster 2015; Saarinen and Nikula 2012). Hultgren et al. (2015) observe that EMI has been implemented without much resistance in Nordic countries, whereas in some parts of Europe, such as Italy, it has met with stronger resistance (Dimova et al. 2015). Some contexts are particularly interesting as EMI has been introduced alongside official policies of bilingualism. For example, Doiz et al. (2014) looked at students' attitudes towards Spanish, Basque and English in the Basque Country.

France is a latecomer in the global trend towards EMI which makes it an under-researched context. Most researchers who have focused on France have studied attitudes towards English rather than EMI per se. There has been a tendency in the literature to concentrate on the authoritarian nature of French language policy. Because of the long prescriptive tradition of language regulation in France, scholars overwhelmingly seem concerned about how the French “police” their language (Ager 2001; Cooper 1989; Ferguson 2006; Liddicoat 2013; May 2001; Schiffman 1996; Spolsky 2004). Few comment on the fact that language policies (such as the 1994 Toubon Law) are often completely flouted. Scholars and journalists alike frequently recite the plethora of language policies, language bodies and terminology commissions to illustrate French attitudes towards the English language. The Académie Française, which has become an object of fascination for the Anglophone world according to Estival and Pennycook (2011: 338), is regularly quoted, as if it were representative of the French people. Its views are certainly indicative of an underlying angst but do not necessarily reflect all sections of society. As a result, there is often the misconception that the French are vehemently opposed to English and will defend their language at all costs.

Few studies have looked at how EMI has been received in the political sphere. The present study focuses on the process of policy making and more specifically on how the 2013 Fioraso Law, which effectively legalised courses in English in French universities, was debated in Parliament. It attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. Which issues are discussed in the parliamentary debates? Which are the sensitive issues?
2. Is the drafting process influenced by the parliamentary debates at all? Which ideological and political stances are reflected in the final draft?

This paper begins with a brief historical overview of French language policy,

followed by a theoretical discussion about language policy formation. After presenting the overall findings, I finally consider how the study provides insight into the process of policy creation.

2. French language policy context

With its long history of protection and promotion of French language, Spolsky (2004: 13) has described France as “a country with one of the most sophisticated and demanding language policies in existence”. Especially after the Second World War, with the rise in the influence of the United States, there was a growing concern that increased Americanisation would lead to the deterioration of French language (and culture). In response to the perceived threat of English, a flurry of language bodies and terminology commissions was created in the 1960s and 1970s to develop French terminology and resist the “invasion” of English words into French vocabulary. This wave of linguistic activism and “cultural patriotism” (Hazeersingh 2015: 224) culminated in the Bas-Lauriol Law (1975). This bill was passed to “protect” French consumers, employees and service users from foreign terms which might otherwise be misleading. It restricted the use of foreign words in public signs, in work contracts and documentation for appliances. Although protectionist measures were increasingly discussed during the 1970s in terms of “language rights” (Chansou 1997), the law was not popular and was considered by many as too interventionist.

From the 1980s onwards, various politicians began complaining about the inefficiency of the Bas-Lauriol Law and called for renewed legislation. In 1993, Jacques Toubon presented a new language policy bill to Parliament which effectively extended the Bas-Lauriol Law dispositions. The policy sparked much debate, especially amongst socialists who took the bill to the Constitutional Council. In 1994, the Toubon Law was finally passed after numerous modifications. The final bill (which had been considerably “softened”) still caused much public controversy and resistance. Article 1 states the general principles of the law:

As the language of the Republic, according to the Constitution, the French language is a fundamental element of France’s personality and heritage.

It is the language of teaching, work, communication and public services.

It is the privileged link between the states forming the Francophone community.

(Toubon Law 1994, Article 1, my translation)

The law imposed the use of French in a number of domains such as advertising,

employment, commercial communication, public signs, media and education. Regarding education, the law explicitly states that teaching, exams, dissertations and theses must be in French, in public and private schools and universities alike. The only exceptions include foreign language teaching, foreign visiting professors and certain specialised schools (i.e. international schools).

Leclerc (2016) estimates that throughout the twentieth century, the French government adopted approximately 40 legislative texts concerning the preservation of French language. It therefore came as a surprise when a new bill was introduced in March 2013 facilitating EMI in French universities. Only Article 2 of the law, most commonly known as the Fioraso Law” (named after the Minister of Higher Education and Research), actually concerns language policy. Article 2 is an extension of the 1994 Toubon Law in that it adds another exception to it, making it easier (in principle) to teach in languages other than French. Although over the past decade there have been a number of political initiatives aimed at introducing English language teaching at earlier stages in primary education, no politician had yet attempted to interfere with the Toubon Law and the medium of instruction. The Fioraso Law thus signalled in this sense a historical departure from the traditional French-only language policy.

3. The process of policy creation

Although the Fioraso Law was adopted in July 2013, it was the result of a year-long process of national consultation, debates, meetings and discussions. The government began with a six-month national consultation phase in July 2012 and organised meetings all over France. Finally, in March 2013, the bill was presented before Parliament. It proposed to authorise teaching in foreign languages when programmes are part of an international agreement with another foreign university. The parliamentary debates continued over a period of three months. Only then, after hours of deliberation, was the bill voted. Scholars often tend to ignore the preliminary phase leading up to the policy. Instead, much of the focus is on the final text and its implementation.

The period preceding the *de jure* language policy is known, in Johnson’s (2013) terms, as the process of policy “creation”. It refers to “how and why language policies are created” (Johnson 2013: 224). In other words, it involves understanding how a policy text was arrived at and the rationale behind it. Tracing the textual transformations of policy drafts (e.g. insertions or deletions) can be revealing and provide insight into the policy’s “trajectory”

(Ball 1993). During the creation process, interested parties and pressure groups strive to influence key policy concepts and shape policy discourse in particular directions (cf. “context of influence”, Bowe et al. 1992). This is most evident in parliamentary debates. Johnson’s (2013) approach to policy creation is particularly dynamic in that he does not view policy texts as fixed linguistic objects but as the outcome of negotiation, compromise and struggle. By emphasising how national policy texts are negotiated, debated, drafted through interaction, he draws attention to the human agency behind policy documents. Even though official documents may not necessarily be read by practitioners (Ball 1993), analysing how a bill originated enables us to uncover the discourses within and without the policy text (Johnson 2009). It is precisely the process of policy “creation” which is of interest in this study.

4. The study

Following the tradition of the “ethnography of language policy” (Hornberger and Johnson 2007; Johnson 2013), this paper sets out to present the “trajectory” of Article 2 in the political arena. It focuses on two main policy creation activities, notably the parliamentary debates and the policy drafting process, both of which contributed towards the production of the final version of Article 2. The aim is to show the journey of Article 2 and how the final text was arrived at. The first part of the study presents the salient themes which arose out of the parliamentary debates. The second part analyses which elements of the parliamentary debates have been recontextualised into the various policy drafts.

4.1 Data set

The study comprises two types of data: official language policy legislation (different versions of Article 2) and “spoken” texts (official transcripts of the parliamentary debates). All materials were found on official government websites and are freely accessible. For the legislative policy texts, four different versions of Article 2 were selected including the initial and final bill: 20 March 2013, 28 May 2013, 12 June 2013 and 3 July 2013. I chose to include four drafts rather than just the initial and final version to illustrate the policy trajectory and show how the bill was continually revised throughout the parliamentary debates. As for the parliamentary debates, the official written transcript covering Article 2 includes over 40,000 words. The debates took place at the National Assembly and at the Senate between 26 March 2013 and 20 June 2013.

Finally, I interviewed Minister Fioraso, the main figure behind the Fioraso Law on 18 May 2015 (the interview lasted 26 minutes). To avoid the “bland, public relations type responses” (Edwards and Holland 2013: 84), I conducted a highly structured interview in which I asked very specific questions. This enabled me to find out about her position regarding EMI as well as the process of language policy creation. Initially, the interview was included in the main data set, however I decided to use it as an interpretative resource which would inform my overall understanding of Article 2.

4.2 Methodology and data analysis

In order to investigate the process of language policy creation, this paper has taken a critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach. There are numerous branches of CDA but the one used for this research is the Discourse-Historical Approach (henceforth DHA) (Reisigl and Wodak 2016). One of the main aims of the DHA is to “demystify” hegemonic discourses. The emphasis is primarily on tracing the history and trajectory of dominant discourses through an intertextual analysis. Firstly, because of the long history of language policy legislation in France, it seems particularly important that Article 2 should be studied within its historical and socio-political context. Secondly, the historical dimension aligns well with Johnson’s (2013) objective of finding out how a policy was arrived at (process of policy “creation”). Here the DHA is adopted to make the process of language policy making more transparent and to challenge dominant language ideologies which are present in the political sphere.

I first identified the salient topics from the parliamentary debates through thematic analysis (Mann 2016). Three major themes emerged. In order to arrive at these data-driven overarching themes a rigorous and systematic coding system was followed which involved: coding the data, looking for patterns and relationships, and generating themes. All coding was done through the NVivo software. Each theme was then discussed in relation to the discursive strategies (Reisigl and Wodak 2016) used in the discursive representation of EMI:

1. Nomination strategies (discursive construction).
2. Predication strategies (discursive characterisation or qualification).
3. Argumentation strategies (what arguments are employed).
4. Perspectivisation strategies (positioning of speaker, his/her involvement or distance).
5. Intensification or mitigation strategies (modifies illocutionary force of utterances).

Since parliamentary debates are primarily about persuading other political actors why a proposal should be adopted or not (Fairclough and Fairclough 2012), particular attention is placed on the “argumentation strategies” deployed. This paper notably examines the different “topoi” used to justify or challenge certain truth claims. Topoi are means of argumentation that belong to the required premises. They are “conclusion rules” which connect arguments with the conclusion (Reisigl and Wodak 2016: 35). The identification of topoi contributes to the deconstruction of common-sense discourses.

In order to analyse whether the drafting process of Article 2 was influenced by the parliamentary debates, I draw on a central concept of CDA: “recontextualisation” (Wodak and Fairclough 2010). “Recontextualisation” is taken here to mean a “bricolage” process whereby texts borrow and copy bits and pieces of ideas from elsewhere (Ball 1998: 126). In this case, recontextualisation takes place from one genre to another, from verbal interaction (parliamentary debates) to written text (the Article 2 bill). The extent to which oral discussions are reflected in the drafting process of Article 2 can be studied through an intertextual analysis (Wodak and Fairclough 2010). By looking for the intertextual relationships, that is, how texts are linked to other texts, I identify which ideas have been selectively incorporated into the different versions of the bill.

5. Thematic findings

In the following sections, for purposes of clarity, I use the terms “EMI opponents” and “EMI proponents”. “EMI proponents” refer to MPs who were, on the whole, in favour of voting for the proposal even if they may have suggested modifications and amendments to the bill. “EMI opponents” include politicians who expressed a desire to repeal the proposal or who seemed still largely unsatisfied with the bill even after multiple revisions (they may, however, still have voted for it). I do not suggest that there is a clear-cut pro or anti-EMI division. Rather, opinions oscillate along a spectrum with some MPs taking extreme positions on either side.

5.1 Theme 1: EMI for attracting international students

Attracting international students is a major recurring topic in the parliamentary debates. It is advanced as the main reason for introducing EMI and is subject to little dispute. Indeed, all politicians seem to agree on the necessity of attracting *more* international students into French universities. The focus

is specifically on attracting international students who are from “emerging markets” and traditionally non-Francophone areas. The aim is evidently to target countries with strong potential economic growth.

While recruiting international students appears to be a taken-for-granted goal, there is nevertheless much disagreement about the means to achieve this, notably around the question of whether international students should be attracted through English or French medium of instruction. The EMI debate largely turns into a debate about how French universities can become more “attractive” in the eyes of international students. Throughout the debates, the term “attractivité” (“*attractiveness*”), a buzzword amongst policy-makers, occurs over 65 times.

5.1.1 The topos of “linguistic barrier”

As mentioned above, it is not so much the “necessity” to attract international students which is debated, but rather *how* to attract them. Indeed, MPs discuss whether EMI can be used (or not) as a tool to attract students from emerging economies who might not otherwise come to France. Minister Fioraso repeatedly refers to the French language as an “obstacle” for international students. The metaphor of French as a barrier becomes a main topos in her argumentation: “Beaucoup voudraient venir en France, mais se heurtent à l’obstacle de la langue” (Many [students] would like to come France but are faced with the language obstacle). Note the verb “heurter” in French which literally translates as “to hit” or “collide with” and evokes a physical barrier. The construction of French language as a “problem” serves to justify the introduction of courses in English. The topos of linguistic barrier is taken up by other MPs both explicitly and implicitly. However, the idea that French constitutes an obstacle is contested by EMI opponents:

S’est-on vraiment posé la question de savoir si les freins à l’accueil des étudiants étrangers n’étaient pas ailleurs que dans la barrière de la langue ? Vous raisonnez comme si la seule barrière s’opposant à l’accueil d’étudiants étrangers en France était celle de la langue, mais c’est tout à fait faux. (MP Fasquelle)

[Has anyone really questioned whether the obstacle to receiving foreign students was to be found in the language barrier? You are arguing as if the only obstacle to receiving foreign students in France was one of language, but that is far from true.]

Here MP Fasquelle debunks the topos by arguing that international students may not be coming to France for a variety of other reasons. Other factors affecting “attractiveness” are mentioned, including accommodation standards, visas and residency permits.

Indirectly linked to the topos of linguistic “barrier” is the idea of linguistic “openness”. EMI proponents discuss EMI in terms of “openness” and how it enables universities to “open up to the world”. This motif recurs throughout the debates and can be found in all themes. Regarding theme 1, supporting EMI is repeatedly presented as giving access to international students and therefore to the rest of the world. Conversely, being against EMI supposes being narrow-minded and against other cultures. One MP goes as far as stating: “il n’y a que M. Fasquelle qui a une phobie de l’étudiant étranger” [Only Mr Fasquelle has a phobia about foreign students] (MP Mandon). This accusation of xenophobia causes complete disruption and chaos within the National Assembly. A point of order is raised and MP Fasquelle demands a formal apology from MP Mandon. The incident is subsequently brought up six times in total by various politicians. The way anti-immigration ideology is linked with defenders of French language is highly significant.

The topic of immigration gradually emerges into the discussions through references to the infamous “circulaire Guéant”, a 2011 government circular issued under President Sarkozy, which aimed to reduce the number of non-EU students staying in France after obtaining their degree. By bringing up this document, pro-EMI supporters are implicitly suggesting that EMI opponents are against “foreign” students. Throughout the debates, defenders of French are constantly associated with nationalistic and protectionist ideology and therefore feel obliged to distance themselves from such positions: “je n’ai jamais, je dis bien jamais, considéré notre langue comme une forteresse assiégée” [I have never, I repeat never, considered our language to be a besieged fortress] (MP Bloche). Here the war imagery serves to associate opponents of Article 2 with the language of the far right. This not only illustrates the way in which the EMI debate is instrumentalised for political purposes, it shows how politicians are trying to shape the discursive construction of EMI in order to justify the decision to allow more courses in English. From the beginning, Minister Fioraso frames EMI in such a way that it becomes symbolic of openness, diversity and inclusiveness. The metaphor of French as a “barrier” in itself evokes closed borders. EMI opponents reject such characterisations by engaging in similar discourses of “openness”. In the same way, French is constructed as a language of economic opportunity and access. What is revealing is the way in which opponents of EMI deploy identical discursive strategies to proponents of EMI. This reveals a discursive struggle in which two narratives are competing to achieve hegemony. In so doing, both sides are trying to push certain ideas into EMI.

5.2 Theme 2: EMI for the promotion of Francophonie

A major theme in the parliamentary debates is the effect of EMI on Francophonie. MPs discuss at length whether EMI can (or not) help project France's (cultural, linguistic and political) influence abroad. While EMI proponents argue that EMI can stimulate the promotion of Francophonie, opponents claim it will do the opposite. The debate about EMI soon turns into a heated discussion about whether or not EMI constitutes a threat to Francophonie (and to the international status of French). Anti-EMI MPs highlight the potential unforeseen consequences of adopting EMI, such as reducing the incentive to learn French abroad. EMI proponents, on the other hand, argue that by drawing international students to French culture and French language they are effectively strengthening Francophonie.

5.2.1 The topos of "ambassadors"

The potential role that EMI can play in promoting France's cultural influence abroad is a particularly controversial subject. Indeed, when Minister Fioraso begins to suggest in her introductory speech that international students can help spread French language and culture, she is immediately interrupted, to the extent that the President of the Commission has to call for silence. Nevertheless, the idea that EMI can promote Francophonie is taken up by EMI proponents and becomes a key argumentative strategy. Indeed, supporters of EMI assert that international students can serve as "ambassadors" of French language and culture. The topos of ambassadors is extensively deployed by MPs, becoming a recurring motif:

Il leur faut pouvoir suivre des cours en anglais de manière à obtenir leurs diplômes ou à travailler à une thèse. Au bout de trois ans, ils auront appris le français et seront nos ambassadeurs. (MP Attard)

[They need to be able to follow courses in English to pass their exams or work towards a doctorate. Three years later they will have achieved a good command of French and will be our ambassadors.]

There are several assumptions in this statement: firstly that international students are able of following courses in English, secondly that they will acquire French during their stay and thirdly that they will take away a positive image of France. The seemingly logical connection between these three assumptions is suggested by the shift in tenses (from the first modal verb in the present, via the future perfect, to the simple future) which gives strong illocutionary force to the claim. It is assumed that by being in France, international students will automatically be immersed in French culture:

[L]es étudiants s'imprégneront de la culture française, apprendront éventuellement notre langue et, à leur retour, seront les ambassadeurs de notre culture et de nos produits, donc de la francophonie. [...] Un étudiant étranger qui vient étudier en France en repartira, même s'il a étudié en anglais, empreint de la culture française et de nos valeurs, qu'il pourra ensuite diffuser dans son pays d'origine. (MP Apparu)

[The students will become familiar with French culture, may well learn our language and, when they go back, they will be ambassadors for our culture, our products and therefore Francophonie. A foreign student who comes to France to study will go home, even if he has studied in English, steeped in French culture and values that he will later spread in his own country.]

The metaphor of “soaking up” French culture (and language) is prevalent in explaining how international students will serve as an extension of Francophonie. The metaphor implies a natural, effortless process whereby culture (and language) are absorbed like a sponge. By acting as ambassadors, international students are portrayed as active agents of France’s “rayonnement” (i.e. influence, prestige) abroad. This lexical choice is significant in the EMI debate as “rayonnement” is usually associated with the discourse on Francophonie (Pelletier 2010). By stressing discourses on Francophonie and “rayonnement”, pro-EMI politicians are strategically placing emphasis on France (and its language) rather than on English. They are deliberately highlighting shared goals in an attempt to downplay disagreement and criticism. EMI supporters thus find themselves adopting similar discourses to defenders of French language. By associating EMI with the spread of French culture and language abroad, EMI becomes key to France’s international “rayonnement”.

Even though some MPs completely dismiss the topos of “ambassadors”, the majority of EMI opponents argue that if EMI programmes legally require international students to take French language courses, then this would potentially reinforce the promotion of French. Hence whilst the fiercest opponents of EMI maintain that EMI and Francophonie are incompatible, more moderate MPs do envisage a role for EMI in the promotion of Francophonie.

5.2.2 The negative signal of Article 2

While EMI proponents try to downplay the effects of the law, insisting on its limited impact, opponents stress the wide-ranging negative consequences. Anti-EMI MPs are worried about the symbolic effects of legally allowing EMI into French universities. They argue that Article 2 will be interpreted as a sign that the French are letting down supporters and defenders of French across the world. The adoption of Article 2 is constructed as a sign of weakness and as a form of surrender. Beyond the symbolic effects, if French is gradually replaced

with EMI in French universities, this might jeopardise the international status of French and reduce the incentive to learn French abroad:

Quant aux cours en langue anglaise, très franchement, c'est un abandon absolument incroyable de la souveraineté française et de la culture française. Qui va encore aller apprendre le français à l'étranger si en France on n'est même pas fichu de faire des cours en français dans nos universités. Voilà, c'est un véritable scandale. (MP Fasquelle)

[As far as courses taught in English are concerned, this constitutes an absolutely incredible surrender of French sovereignty and French culture. Who is going to bother to learn French if in France we are not even capable of teaching courses in French in our own universities. This is quite scandalous.]

MP Fasquelle insists that the law will, with time, have disastrous effects on the French language and the EMI “exception” will become the rule. He pushes his argument even further by suggesting that, eventually, the French language will disappear. These apocalyptic predictions are often supported by quotations from prominent French figures: “Comme l'affirme Michel Serres, une langue disparaît lorsqu'elle ne peut pas tout dire. Elle devient virtuellement morte.” [As Michel Serres asserts, a language disappears when it is no longer able to express everything. It becomes virtually dead.] (MP Fasquelle). Other politicians retort that the proposal has been sufficiently amended and revised to ensure that French will remain the primary medium of instruction. EMI, they assure, will only be allowed in strictly defined circumstances which are established in the written policy text. The diverging views on the likely impact of the bill reflect the multiple interpretations of the law.

5.2.3 Reimagining a modern Francophonie

While all MPs concur that it is necessary to defend and promote Francophonie, their idea of how to do so varies. For EMI proponents, it is necessary to reinvent a modern version of Francophonie which is open and inclusive of EMI. For them, allowing EMI reflects pragmatism and the ability to adapt to current trends. Those who oppose EMI are, on the contrary, portrayed as extreme and irrational. Minister Fioraso accuses them of acting out of passion rather than with reason. She repeatedly links EMI to progress whereas the status quo is deemed insular and backwards: “l'enseignement en français devrait permettre d'être entre nous, bien éloigné du monde entier, mais non, mais non. Le progrès c'est d'être ouvert” [teaching in French allows us to stay together, far away from the rest of the world, no, no. Progress means being open]. The notion of “openness”, which was already evoked earlier, resurges here. Embracing Article 2 becomes synonymous with being open to linguistic (and cultural) diversity:

La France doit s'ouvrir davantage au plurilinguisme [...] [L]a diversité linguistique [est] à mon sens la meilleure arme pour la promotion de notre langue dans le monde. Nous ne pouvons pas nous recroqueviller sur nous-mêmes et agir seuls et de manière défensive. (MP Cordery)

France must be more open to plurilingualism. To my mind, linguistic diversity is the best weapon to promote our language in the world. We cannot hunker down and act alone, on the defensive.

By linking EMI to linguistic diversity and multilingualism, EMI proponents are able to accuse anti-EMI politicians of being against linguistic diversity. Note how the notion of being “open” stands in contrast with the inward-looking, parochial defenders of French.

Here we see again a discursive struggle to define what a “modern” interpretation of Francophonie is. The (in)compatibility of EMI and linguistic diversity remains a fundamental point of disagreement. For EMI opponents, authorising courses in English is a problem as English may eventually replace all other languages. Conversely, EMI advocates argue that English can peacefully co-exist with other languages.

5.2.4 Threat to French culture

The debate about Francophonie also raises questions about whether or not EMI represents a threat to French culture. The constant references to the need to “defend” French and Francophonie give the impression that French language/culture is under attack.¹ MP Myard deplores “cette espèce de maladie consistant à vouloir s'exprimer dans une langue qui n'est pas la nôtre” [this obsession to want to express ourselves in a language which is not ours] (MP Myard). He associates EMI with the global cosmopolitan urban elite who are, according to him, “fascinated” by English: “Cet article porte la marque des cervelles lavées qui excellent à s'exprimer en Globish et pensent ainsi se faire comprendre de la terre entière” [This article bears the mark of those who are brain-washed, who excel at speaking in Globish and think that this is how they can make themselves understood throughout the whole world]. His virulently satirical attack is by far the strongest throughout the debate. He suggests that supporters of EMI have been indoctrinated by Anglo-American ideology. For him, EMI is a form of linguistic and cultural imperialism: “Il y a un moment où il faut savoir dire ‘non’. Seul l'esclave dit ‘oui’ et vous vous placez dans cette position” [There comes a moment when you have to be able to say “No”. Only a slave says “Yes” and you are putting yourselves in this position] (MP Myard).

1. The verb “defend” is used 43 times during the parliamentary debates.

The metaphor of the slave is particularly powerful and is indirectly taken up by others who present France as a country “culturellement colonisé” (MP Salles).

MP Myard’s use of the term “Globish” (a contraction of “global” and “English”) above is particularly significant as it has extremely negative connotations. Here it refers to the type of basic English spoken by non-native speakers and is also characterised as: “globish réducteur”, “langage international appauvri”, “sabir” and “langue ânonée” (reductive Globish, impoverished international language, pidgin, mumbling). These nominalisation strategies serve to discredit EMI altogether. Furthermore, what is implied behind the notion of “Globish” is that it is the language of international business and commerce:

[C]et article n’ouvre pas l’université, il la ferme sur ce sabir parlé aujourd’hui un peu partout, que l’on présente comme le deus ex machina, et qui n’est en réalité qu’une conception mercantile de la langue imaginée pour vendre des cacahuètes. (MP Myard)

[This article does not open up the university, it restricts it to this kind of pidgin spoken everywhere today and presented as the deus ex machina, when in reality it is just a mercantile conception of language devised to sell peanuts.]

He severely condemns the neoliberal agenda underpinning EMI. For him, the English language disseminates a culture of profit and global capitalism that destroys linguistic and cultural diversity. Resisting Article 2 therefore becomes a way of rejecting certain ideologies.

5.3 Theme 3: EMI for equal opportunity

EMI proponents argue that Article 2 is a democratic step forward especially for university students who did not previously have access to courses in English. EMI courses have existed for many years in France but mostly in the prestigious and highly competitive Grandes Ecoles and business schools.² Article 2 is presented as advantageous for students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds who will now be able to improve their English skills. The assumption that EMI leads to English language acquisition is challenged by some who advocate teaching English rather than teaching *in* English.

5.3.1 Topos of “democratic right”

EMI is repeatedly presented by EMI supporters as a democratic tool for equal opportunity that will benefit French university students. By giving them access

2. All those who obtain their baccalauréat are entitled to a place in the university of their area, but the best pupils often decide to follow an intensive two-year preparation in order to take the competitive exams giving access to the Grandes Ecoles where most of France’s élite have been educated. Such “schools” benefit from smaller classes and better funding than the non-selective universities.

to courses taught in English, it is argued that they will have the same opportunities as the students from the Grandes Ecoles:

Ces nouvelles dispositions visent non seulement à permettre aux étudiants étrangers d'étudier en anglais dans notre pays, mais aussi à corriger une injustice : dans les Grandes Ecoles, les étudiants ont accès à de nombreux cours dispensés en langue étrangère, alors que tel n'est pas le cas à l'université. (MP Feltesse)

These new measures not only aim at enabling foreign students to study in English in our country, but also aim at correcting an injustice whereby students in the Grandes Ecoles have access to many courses in a foreign language, which is not the case for university students.

The fact that the limited access to EMI is constructed as an “injustice” is significant. The way in which MPs attach core democratic values to EMI reflects the construction of a political ideology. Through the topos of “democratic right”, MPs make the claim that Article 2 has the power to reduce the gap between the elite schools and public universities:

[O]n est un peu faux cul parce qu'à Sciences Po, où j'enseigne eh bien on parle en anglais et ça veut dire que nos élites ils ont le droit eux de parler en anglais et dans nos universités on n'aurait pas le droit de parler anglais. Et donc il y a une inégalité qui est une inégalité très forte. (MP Le Déaut)

[W]e're all a bit phoney because at Science Po I teach in English, well we speak in English, this means that the elite have the right to speak in English but not in our universities? This strikes me as inequality with a vengeance.

Note how this extract is replete with politically loaded words such as “elite”, “right” and “inequality”. Those who have the “right” to speak in English (i.e. the “elites”) are juxtaposed against those who do not have the “right”. The use of the term “elite” is particularly interesting. Constructing EMI as a privilege reserved for the elites allows political actors to frame Article 2 in the light of social justice and argue that EMI should be accessible to all.

5.3.2 Topos of “English language skills”

The democratisation argument is also based on the premise that EMI leads to improved English language skills. The topos of “English language skills” enables political actors to construct Article 2 as a democratic measure:

Il constitue également une véritable avancée pour les étudiants français qui ne seront plus obligés de s'offrir, pour ceux qui le pouvaient, des séjours à l'étranger pour apprendre une autre langue. Cet article participe ainsi à la démocratisation de l'accès aux langues étrangères. (MP Cordery)

[The bill constitutes real progress for French students who will no longer be obliged (at least those who could afford it) to pay for language courses abroad to learn another language. This article therefore contributes to the democratisation of access to foreign languages.]

It is assumed that EMI will enable local French students to learn English which will in turn help them access better jobs. The discourse on “democratisation” thus becomes intertwined with the discourse on “EMI for greater employability”. Hence EMI is associated with socio-economic opportunities in an unproblematic way and is constructed as a means to achieve socio-economic equality.

EMI opponents contest both topoi by pointing out the constant overlap between English classes and classes taught in English:

De toute façon, vous entretenez une confusion permanente entre la nécessité d'apprendre l'anglais à nos étudiants et la création de cursus en langue anglaise pour attirer les étudiants étrangers en France. Je suis très favorable au renforcement de l'apprentissage de l'anglais dans les universités, mais tel n'est pas le sujet de l'Article 2. (MP Fasquelle)

[In any case, you continually confuse the necessity of teaching English to our students and the introduction of courses in English to attract foreign students to France. I am very much in favour of reinforcing the teaching of English at university, but this is not the object of the article.]

By specifying that he is strongly in favour of English language teaching, he portrays himself as a moderate rather than as an anti-English militant. The argument “of course learning English is important” is prevalent amongst EMI opponents. Even MP Myard, the fiercest critic of EMI, acknowledges the importance of teaching English to French students. Hence there is disagreement on how to improve French students’ proficiency in English and the discourse on democratisation is not taken up by all.

6. Tracing the textual transformations of Article 2

The bill was drafted over a period of several months and was subjected to numerous modifications, revisions and amendments. Table 1 traces the textual trajectory and transformations of Article 2. It shows four different versions of the policy text: from 20 March 2013 when it was first presented to the National Assembly to 3 July 2013 when it was adopted by both the National Assembly and the Senate. At first glance, the final version is noticeably longer than the first, suggesting that a number of precisions and conditions have been added. A closer look at the text shows that the first version more or less gives free rein to EMI, whereas the last one tightly controls and limits EMI. The transformation is striking in that it almost appears as a complete turnaround: the Fioraso Law goes from facilitating EMI to restricting it.

Table 1. Evolution of Article 2 (my translation, my emphasis)

20 March 2013 Bill presented to National Assembly	28 May 2013 Text adopted by National Assembly
<p>Exceptions may also be justified by the nature of certain classes which are given as part of an agreement with a foreign or international institution as set out in article L. 123–7 or within the framework of a European programme.</p>	<p>Exceptions may also be allowed for certain classes when they are justified out of pedagogical necessity and when these classes are given within the framework of an agreement with a foreign or international institution as set out in article L. 123–7 or within the framework of a European programme to facilitate the development of multilingual, cross-border programmes and diplomas.</p> <p>In such instances, classes can only be given partly in a foreign language. Foreign students receiving such classes will be given French language courses. Their level of mastery of French will be included as part of the overall assessment for their diploma.</p>
<p>12 June 2013 Text adopted by Senate Commission</p> <p>Exceptions may be justified:</p> <p>Out of pedagogical necessity, when classes are given within the framework of an agreement with a foreign or international institution as set out in article L. 123–7 or within the framework of a European programme;</p> <p>For the development of multilingual, cross-border programmes and diplomas.</p> <p>Foreign students following courses in a foreign language will be given courses in French culture and, when their mastery of French is insufficient, French language classes. Their level of mastery of French will be assessed as part of the overall assessment for their diploma.</p>	<p>3 July 2013 Text adopted by Senate and National Assembly</p> <p>Exceptions may be justified:</p> <p>Out of pedagogical necessity, when classes are given within the framework of an agreement with a foreign or international institution as set out in article L. 123–7 or within the framework of a European programme;</p> <p>For the development of multilingual, cross-border programmes and diplomas.</p> <p>In such instances, classes can only be given partly in a foreign language and only if authorisation for such programmes fixes the proportion of classes to be given in French. The minister responsible for the usage of the French language in France will immediately be informed of the exceptions made, for how long and why.</p> <p>Foreign students following courses in a foreign language will be given French language classes if their mastery of French is insufficient. Their satisfactory level of mastery of French will be assessed as part of the overall assessment for their diploma.</p> <p>The classes offered will enable French students to acquire a mastery of the language in which the classes are given.</p>

The chart below provides a graphical representation of the textual transformations of Article 2. The Y-axis represents the number of words of each version. In terms of the word count, the first version of Article 2 was under 50 words but by July it reached almost 175 words suggesting that the parliamentary debates may have influenced the text production. The different shades represent the legal conditions listed within each individual bill.³ For example, the initial bill only has one condition whereas the final bill has five. The different shades illustrate which conditions were kept and which were removed. For instance, if we look at the version of 12 June, we can see that condition 4 has disappeared only to be reinserted in the final version.

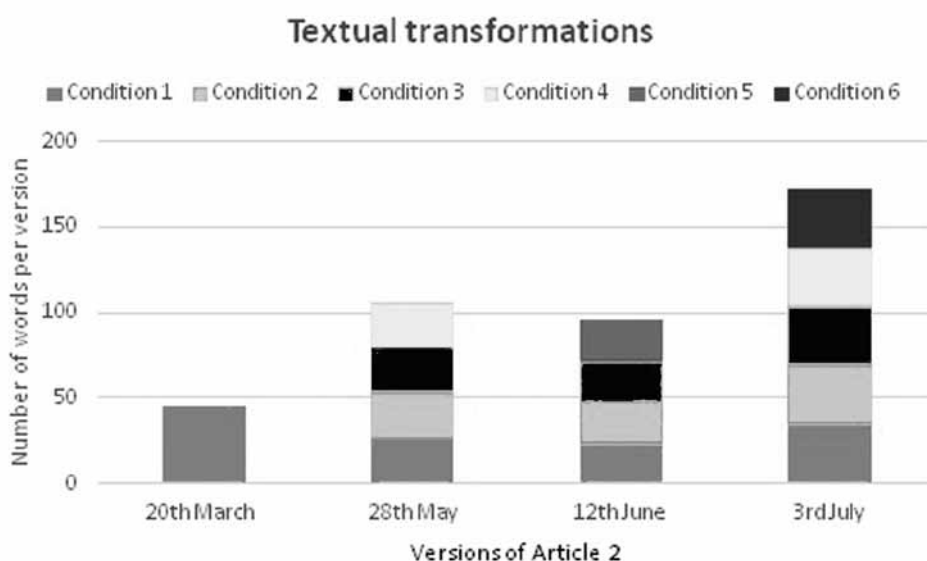


Figure 1. Textual transformations of the law

I propose to briefly examine the main amendments and modifications in order to identify which issues from the debates have been recontextualised in the

3. Condition 1: Courses can only be taught if there is a pedagogical need to do so.
- Condition 2: International students are required to take a French language course.
- Condition 3: International students' proficiency in French is assessed and taken into account for the completion of their degree.
- Condition 4: Degrees can only be taught "partly" in English.
- Condition 5: International students are required to take a French culture course.
- Condition 6: The ministry must approve EMI courses and fix the proportion of courses to be taught in French.

drafting process. A number of conditions were added to the initial bill on 28 May 2013. The following are particularly revealing:

- Courses can only be taught in English if there is a “pedagogical need” to do so (condition 1).
- Degrees or courses can only be taught “partly” in English (condition 4).
- International students are required to take a French language course. Their proficiency in French is assessed and taken into account for the completion of their degree (conditions 2 and 3).

Although these conditions are unclear (e.g. what does “partly” mean?) and open to broad interpretations, the revisions do show that concerns have been taken into account. It appears that an attempt has been made to limit the use of EMI and provide safeguards. The fact that international students are obliged to learn French is undoubtedly an attempt to reassure Francophonie lobbyists who expressed great concern about the declining status of French. Furthermore, conditions 1 and 4 reflect efforts to contain EMI and maintain French as the main medium of instruction. In the 12 July version, it is specified that international students must not only learn French but must also take French culture lessons. This reflects the discussions around whether or not EMI poses a threat to French culture. However, this amendment was later withdrawn because it was deemed too difficult to determine what constitutes “French culture”.

The final bill from 3 July is particularly interesting. The last amendment stipulates that courses taught in foreign languages (i.e. English) to French students must enable them to become proficient in the language of instruction. This reflects the discussions about the need for French students to improve their English language skills. This amendment was probably added as part of the “democratisation discourse” around EMI. It shows concern for French students when in fact the debates mainly concentrated on attracting international students.

The fact that Article 2 incorporates some concerns voiced throughout the parliamentary debates suggests that the final bill is the product of negotiation and compromise. However, even though the final draft does appear to attend to the different ideological stances, the amendments are mainly cosmetic. The conditions listed above are intentionally vague and open to a myriad of possible interpretations. This was confirmed by Minister Fioraso when I asked her in an interview about one amendment in particular:

Marianne: Et dans la version finale de cet article, enfin de la loi, il est écrit que les formations d'enseignement supérieur ne peuvent être que “partiellement” proposées en

langue étrangère. Qu'est-ce que vous entendez par "partiellement", finalement qu'on peut interpréter un peu?

Minister Fioraso: Bah c'était bien le but. Il fallait pour obtenir un vote et faire taire la polémique, il fallait quand même négocier sur les amendements [...] Donc ça, ça fait partie des concessions qu'on est obligé de faire, des compromis qu'on est obligé de faire et un amendement a été voté et j'ai fait exprès de dire "partiellement" parce que comme ça, ça laissait toute liberté, donc voilà, c'est volontairement vague.

[Marianne: And in the final version of the article, well of the law, it is stipulated that higher education programmes can only offer courses "partly" in a foreign language. What do you mean by "partly" is it open to different interpretations?

Minister Fioraso: Well this was the goal. To get the law through and to put an end to the controversy, we had to negotiate on the amendments [...] So this was one of the concessions that had to be made and an amendment was passed. I put "partly" on purpose to leave room for manoeuvre, so that it was deliberately vague.]

This shows how concessions are sometimes adopted purely in order to satisfy and appease opponents. From Minister Fioraso's comment, it is possible to assume that some of the other conditions are also symbolic rather than legally binding.

I argue that Article 2 disproportionately reflects EMI opponents' voices. The strongest critics of EMI are in fact a very vocal minority but they have considerable influence on the process of policy text production. The two fiercest opponents of EMI (MP Fasquelle and MP Myard) on average speak more than EMI proponents (excluding the Minister). For example, the NVivo software revealed that MP Fasquelle's contributions represent 11.41% in terms of speech coverage and 6.67% for MP Myard while other MPs talk less (e.g. MP Attard: 1.73%; MP Buffet: 2.42%). Although the parliamentary debates revealed significant resistance towards EMI, the majority of MPs were in favour of adopting EMI albeit in a moderate and controlled way. The number and nature of modifications made to the final version of Article 2 suggest that resistance was much stronger than was actually the case in the debates. If Minister Fioraso had originally intended Article 2 to facilitate EMI, the final bill is still fairly restrictive. Hence there seems to be a mismatch between the final policy text which incorporates discourses of linguistic protectionism and the general support for EMI manifested in the parliamentary debates.

7. Discussion

The way in which EMI is negotiated alongside a discourse promoting the French language in the final bill reflects some political and ideological tensions. EMI supporters have to play the “Francophonie card” and be seen to firmly promote French language if they want to stand a chance of getting the bill passed. By stressing discourses on Francophonie and “rayonnement”, pro-EMI politicians are strategically placing emphasis on France (and its language) rather than on English. This is not because all French MPs suffer from depressing nostalgia (Hazeersingh 2015), it is because it is part of their argumentation strategy. Politicians are not simply arguing about whether or not courses in English should be allowed, they are primarily “doing politics” (Wodak 2009). Both EMI proponents and opponents may support Article 2 if they believe it meets their political aims. Hence politicians who argue against Article 2 may not be against EMI per se. However, politically speaking, and considering the long history of language policy legislation in France, it would be a mistake to appear not to want to defend the French language. This is partly why Article 2 is almost systematically discussed in terms of how it can strengthen French language and culture.

Furthermore, the list of conditions in Article 2 gives a sense that the centralised state is still sovereign and in control. The discrepancy between the legal text and the desire to facilitate EMI illustrates how the French government is torn between policies of linguistic interventionism and *laissez-faire*. The desire to be competitive in the international education market is weighed against the centralised model of the nation-state. Political actors want to take part in the global knowledge economy while maintaining an appearance of loyalty to French language and culture. Hence some politicians support EMI but do not seem prepared to admit it publicly.

Finally, it is important to remember that although Article 2 features under the Fioraso Law, it is in fact an extension of the Toubon Law (1994) establishing French as the language of instruction. In effect it stipulates further conditions under which languages other than French can be used for teaching. With this in mind, it becomes easier to understand why Article 2 appears to limit EMI rather than facilitate it: Article 2 has to be in keeping with the protectionist tenor of the Toubon Law. As a result, the discourse on the protection of French language is overly stressed (in Parliament but also in the final version of the bill). There is therefore a gap between the way MPs talk about EMI and how oral discussions are recontextualised in language legislation. This is why I

contend that French politicians are, in reality, more accepting of EMI than their political rhetoric may suggest.

8. Conclusion

This paper presented the salient themes which arose from the parliamentary debates and displayed the most consensual and contentious topics. Three major themes emerged: EMI for attracting international students, EMI for the promotion of Francophonie and EMI for equal opportunity. The competing voices within each theme revealed a struggle to shape policy discourse. Each theme was discussed with a particular focus on the discursive strategies used by all political actors in the discursive construction of EMI. Throughout the process of deliberation, a multitude of ideas gravitate around EMI. Despite the controversial nature of the debates, key policy concepts are established (such as “attractiveness”, “openness” and “rayonnement”) and provide the lexicon for EMI discourse.

After having identified the main discourse topics, the study proceeded to trace the textual transformations of the bill to see the extent to which the debates had influenced the drafting process of Article 2. It was found that the final bill was considerably different from the initial draft. Some key issues which surfaced from the parliamentary discussions were reflected in the drafting process, notably the discussions around the perceived threat of EMI to Francophonie. The transformation of the policy text, however, suggests greater resistance towards EMI than was actually the case. It appears that the final version of Article 2 mostly reflects the opinions of the fiercest opponents of EMI suggesting that there is a discrepancy between the policy document and the parliamentary debates.

This paper has provided insight into the French outlook on EMI at the parliamentary level and has shed light on the process of policy creation. More specifically, it has explored the extent to which parliamentary debates influence policy formation. It has demonstrated how Article 2 does not arrive “out of the blue” (Ball 1993: 11) but is the product of multiple voices, competing discourses and compromise. By taking an ethnographic approach to the study of language policy making, this study has revealed the importance of human agency. The way in which oral discussions get incorporated into written policy drafts reflects complex processes of recontextualisation. It transpired that Francophonie lobbyists have a considerable amount of influence when it comes

to policy negotiation and drafting. The French case is particularly interesting due to the history of French language policy. The discourse on the promotion and protection of the French language seems to be resilient in the political sphere. This is why it can be argued that the Fioraso Law does not constitute a historical departure from traditional French language policy since it retains much of the protectionist discourse which characterised the Toubon Law.

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Résumé

L'Article 2 de la loi Fioraso, votée en juillet 2013, légalisait l'enseignement en anglais dans les universités françaises. Cette disposition, très controversée, a donné lieu à des débats passionnés à l'Assemblée Nationale et dans les médias. Alors qu'à première vue cette décision signifie un changement historique dans la politique linguistique de la France, une analyse plus poussée révèle un tableau plus complexe. Cet article étudie la manière dont les débats parlementaires ont été recontextualisés au cours de l'élaboration de la loi. Le but est de mettre en évidence les questions sensibles et les thèmes principaux qui ressortent des débats sur l'enseignement en anglais et de suivre les transformations textuelles de la loi. L'article se concentre sur quatre versions différentes du texte et sur les débats parlementaires. S'appuyant sur la "Discourse-Historical Approach" nous tentons de montrer dans quelle mesure les débats parlementaires ont influencé et donné forme au texte de loi. Une analyse de ces multiples révisions met en lumière des différences importantes entre la première rédaction de 2012 et la dernière de 2013. Les amendements montrent que, sur certaines questions essentielles, il a été tenu compte des débats parlementaires, en particulier des craintes que l'enseignement en anglais puisse représenter une menace pour la francophonie. Cependant, les transformations textuelles indiquent une plus grande résistance à l'égard de l'enseignement en anglais que ce ne fut en réalité le cas au cours des débats parlementaires.

Mots clés: politique linguistique, enseignement en anglais, loi Fioraso, élaboration des politiques, enseignement supérieur en France

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