

European observatory For Plurilingualism



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Editorial: Reading Villers-Cotterêts between the lines

It is, of course, the Cité internationale de la langue française, and the title was inspired by Heinz Wismann's magnificent book *Lire entre les lignes*¹, which I highly recommend. This will be our Ariane's thread through the monument that is the CILF.

The ambition is immense, concerning the French people, but also and mainly all those outside France who share this language. Villers-Cotterêts must be seen as a work in its own right, open to as many readings as there are visitors and readers of the accompanying book *Le livre d'une langue*². As Xavier North points out at the outset, this book is in no way the official book of an exhibition, and yet it is inseparable from the Cité, which would like above all not to be a museum but a living Cité. *

The French have the reputation to have a certain linguistic sensitivity, but we might be surprised to know what representations they have of the French language, what representation they have of it before, and what representation they have of it afterwards, depending on whether they have spent two hours wandering around the Cité at a brisk pace, like good tourists, or whether they would have spent two hours ten times meditating on it, perhaps to find the nugget that some may not have noticed but which opens up an abyss of reflection.

It's out of the question here to describe what we saw there, or thought we saw there, in two visits of two hours each, and as much time skimming through the website, which is very little.

But we now have a few keys that will enable us to continue the investigation with profit.

The French language and the world

Here's a first lead: what does this say about the relationship between the French language and France, and between the French language and the world? France is both absent and omnipresent by force of circumstance, while the world is both present and omniabsent through the force of the French language. It's a strange sensation!

The first thing that strikes you is the immense library in the centre of the first room, from floor to ceiling and which is just a brief survey of an immense literary, scientific and philosophical heritage. It would be futile to look for a statistic, but this heritage, ...- >

Direction and writing : Christian Tremblay, Anne Bui.

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-> which you are invited to navigate according to your dreams and impulses, is primarily French, but not exclusively. We're also drawn into the almost infinite subtleties of this language, which is conveyed by a variety of artists and comedians who, it's easy to see, don't all come from a long lineage of French roots. This feeling is reinforced in the next room, where French speakers from all over the world talk about their experiences with the French language, and even more so in this other large room where you can discover the history of words. Here we are at the very heart of the French language, the language of the world, and it is the greatness or the merit of those who imagined, wanted and thought up the CILF to have understood that when we speak of French, we are speaking of a language spoken throughout the world and we are speaking of the world. The French language is thus very welcoming, and has been ...->

¹ Heinz Wismann, 2024, *Lire entre les lignes*, Albin Michel

² *Le Livre d'une langue*, sous la direction de Barbara Cassin, avec Xavier North, Zeev Gourarier et Hassane Kassi Kouyaté, Editions du patrimoine, Centre des monuments nationaux, Paris, 2023

-> improved by a wealth of influences from all over the world, from Antiquity to the present day. How bizarre! The French language would have something to do with Antiquity, long before France existed. What a great subject!

But we almost missed a room where the subject is colonisation, and Africa in particular. I strongly advise future visitors to listen to the video by the great Senegalese philosopher Souleymane Bachir Diagne and to read his article "La francophonie, c'est le pluriel des langues" in *Le livre d'une langue*, and while we're at it, to continue in the same book, which is not the one in the museum, with "Le roi des griots est un zèbre", by Hassane Kassi Kouyaté, collected by Xavier North. You'll be transported and will begin to understand French in Africa. By the way, do the French know that Africa accounts for half of all French speakers in the world? Allow me. I have a dream. I said that the world is present, but omnipresent, in the sense that it is not incarnate. Africa holds the future of the French language within itself. That's no mean feat, and it's worth thinking about. Why shouldn't African countries, and of course the other countries of the French-speaking world, which wish so have a place at Villers-Cotterêts to showcase their linguistic landscape? Because the languages in Africa, alongside French (and English, Portuguese, Arabic and Spanish), make up a sublime landscape that needs to be tended with a gardener's love. Some people have certainly already thought of this.

A bit of history

There's another little room off to the side which you could easily miss: *From Louis the German to Senghor* (pages 122 to 131). Well, well, well! In 842, Louis the German and Charles the Bald, grandsons of Charlemagne, exchanged the *Strasbourg Oaths*, Charles reading them in Tudesch, the ancestor of the German language, and Louis in front of Charles's troops in a language which was no longer Latin but Romance which linguists consider to be the ancestor of French. So seven centuries before the Ordinance of Villers-Cotterêts, *the Oaths* constitute the first manifestation of an official document in French, which is not modern French, nor even Old French, but which is no longer Latin. So the history of French, if the birth of a language can be dated at all, began around seven centuries before the Ordinance of Villers-Cotterêts³.

What this room is telling us is that the history of the French language predates by a very long way the history of the Kingdom of France that was to become France.

For example, when William the Conqueror seized the crown of England after his victory at Hastings in 1066, it was French that he exported, "the northern variant of Old French" as Bernard Cerquiglini so aptly put it⁴. And, it should be noted, William the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy, was not King of France, which means, in case there was any doubt, that, contrary to the legend developed at the end of the 19th century of *Francien* still so widespread in people's minds today, French existed independently and before the Kingdom of France made it its official language.

This leads us to put the importance of the ordinance into perspective. Although it is a major legal innovation (principle of the right to legibility of legal and administrative texts, reinvention of the concept of official language after the code of the Byzantine emperor Justinian published in 529 and 534), from a linguistic point of view it confirms an evolution that is already very advanced and is part of a continuity that will see the emergence of classical French and then modern French as we know it today.

As Jacques Chaurand explains so well⁵, the influence of French in the twelfth century^c (three centuries before the Ordinance) owes much more to the courts of the Plantagenets and the Dukes of Burgundy and Champagne than to the kingdom of France. In addition to England and the west of what is now France, French was spoken in Hainaut, Burgundy, Savoy, Italy, Venice, Naples and as far afield as the Middle East. Of course, this only applies to literati, poets, scribes, lawyers, the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, because it is always through the "elite" that languages spread.

However, the vitality of Occitan was undeniable. Although the Occitan of the troubadours which flourished

³ For more details, see Bernard Cerquiglini's *Que sais-je?, Naissance du français*, PUF, 1991 and, again by Bernard Cerquiglini, *L'invention de Nithard*, Editions de minuit, 2018, as well as Pascal Quignard's novel *Les larmes*, Grasset&Fasquelle, 2016, not forgetting *Nouvelle histoire de la langue française*, edited by Jacques Chaurand, Editions du Seuil, 1999, pp. 26 to 34, and *1000 ans de langue française, histoire d'une passion*, edited by Alain Rey, Editions Perrin, 2007, p.86 à 98.

⁴ Bernard Cerquiglini, 2024, "*la langue anglaise n'existe pas*", *c'est un français mal prononcé*, Gallimard, p.92.

⁵ Ibid. P. 98-99

at the court of the Count of Toulouse, went into decline after the Albigensian Crusade (1209-1229), ...->

-> just as the King of France did not impose French on the administration of Languedoc after its annexation to the royal domain (1271), Occitan could remain, according to Alain Rey⁶, an administrative and legal language, often alongside Latin, until the 16th century. However, it came under strong pressure from northern French after the end of the Hundred Years' War, and it's easy to see why. The number of legal documents, charters and administrative documents in the langue d'oïl multiplied in the century before the Ordinance of Villers-Cotterêts. And when the ordinance came into force, the French language was still not standardised and was subject to numerous variations, with standardisation taking place later, from the 17th^e century onwards. And a very important clarification is that it refers to "mother tongue French", i.e. the language we speak. Consequently, the question of whether the ordinance, although guided by the desire to put an end to the use of Latin in the legal texts of the Kingdom of France, would have had the effect of destroying regional languages, a question that haunts many minds, would be purely and simply incongruous, as would the idea of establishing a link between the ordinance and Abbé Grégoire's report to the Convention.⁷

In the room dedicated to the ordinance and in the teaching aid produced by artips.fr, Chapter V, *History of French*, there are some surprising formulations. For example:

« Title: French replaces Latin

We go back in time: François I imposes his language.

1539. At that time, the inhabitants of the kingdom of France did not all speak the same language: each region had its own language. Despite this, the use of French, the language of the king, began to spread to the north. »

This is not history, but legend.

We have just said that the French advocated by the ordinance is "the mother tongue of France" and that the French spoken at Court and in its surroundings is French as adopted by the King. That he made it his language can be said in this way. That he "imposed his language" is a bit strong. Moreover, when all the European courts spoke French in the 18th century, it was not the King of France who imposed his language on them, but the courts who chose it.⁸

As for whether "each region has its own language", that's a very contemporary view. With the exception of Breton and Basque, the image of linguistic France at the time of François 1st is more of a cross-fade than a patchwork.

But not everything can be perfect.

A bit of philosophy

If you look in the corners, where the general public probably won't go, you may find other surprises in Villers-Cotterêts, in particular with the quiz still offered by artips.fr to professionals in its chapter I p. 1: "To begin with, what is a language? It's what we use to communicate". The same can be said of a smartphone. We could go on: What is water? It's what fish use to swim. What is air? It's what birds use to fly, and so on. Language reduced to a tool - that's all it takes to justify the spread of Globish and the all-English approach. "Everyone thinks like that," you might ask. It's precisely because "people" think like that that we need to get away from this kind of simplification.

If you have the time to read *Le livre d'une langue*, page 30, you will fortunately read something else by Barbara Cassin and Xavier North, exactly the opposite: "It's not easy to describe a language, that is to say a culture, an idea, a history, the men and women who speak it, and to tell the story in a single passage".

What about plurilingualism?

Whether it's the Délégation générale à la langue française et aux langues de France, the Organisation...->

⁶ Ibid. P. 369-376

⁷ *Rapport sur la nécessité et les moyens d'anéantir les patois et d'universaliser l'usage de la langue française*, Convention nationale, 1794.

⁸ See *Quand l'Europe parlait français* by Marc Fumaroli, Livre de Poche, 2003.

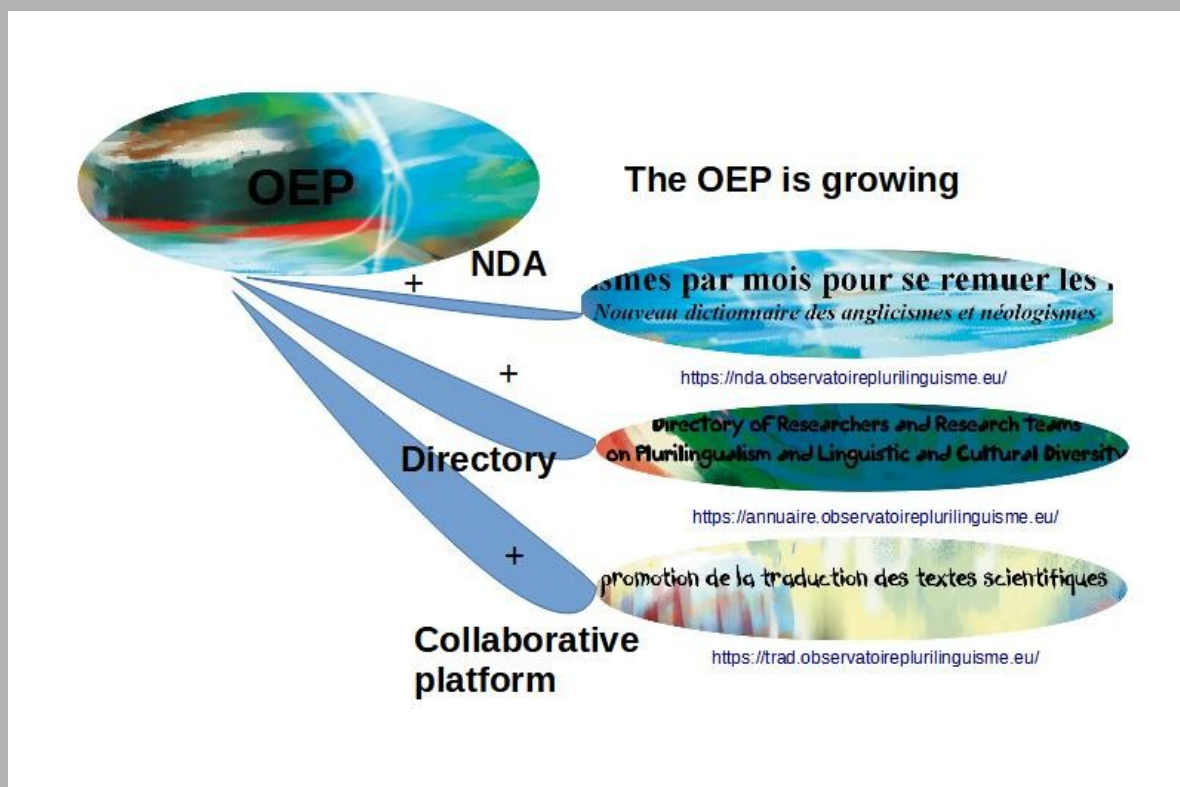
-> internationale de la Francophonie or speeches by the President of the Republic, plurilingualism goes hand in hand with the French language. Their vision of language is free from monolingualism and CILF is resolutely committed to plurilingualism. Plurilingualism is a modern conception of language and a humanism.

When we enter the plurilingualism we defend cultural diversity, starting with linguistic diversity, i.e. "more than one language" according to Derrida's expression, taken up by Barbara Cassin⁹. The author of these lines, for whom this is one of his major battles, would like to see this dimension developed at Villers-Cotterêts. It is not too late. Villers-Cotterêts 1.0 is a beginning. What if the summit next October leads to a Villers-Cotterêts 2.0? Then there's no time to lose.

Christian Tremblay
Chairman of the OEP

The end...-! /

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⁹ Barbara Cassin, 2023, *Plus d'une langue*, Bayard

Articles not to be missed



Heinz Wismann : «Un peu moins de globish, thank you so much» (Le Figaro)

Par Charles Jaigu, publié le 3 avril 2024 - Photo : Le philosophe allemand Heinz Wismann. SEBASTIEN SORIANO / Le Figaro CHRONIQUE - Le philosophe allemand Heinz Wismann vit à Paris et parle l'« européen ». On aimerait que l'une de ses réflexions inspire le prochain Parlement européen : que tous parlent dans leur langue maternelle. Il est le messager européen...

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Pourquoi l'imposition progressive de l'anglais au sein de l'UE est une erreur (chronique de Michel Feltin-Palás, L'Express)

A Bruxelles comme à Strasbourg, on croit souvent qu'utiliser une seule langue permet d'éviter les frais de traduction. C'est oublier les coûts indirects considérables du monolinguisme.

Chronique de Michel Feltin-Palás, lexpress.fr)

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Forum national sur l'aménagement de deux langues officielles d'Haïti (Par Robert Berrouët-Oriol)

Le présent « Plaidoyer pour l'établissement du Forum national sur l'aménagement des deux langues officielles d'Haïti conformément à la Constitution de 1987 » est un document de projet et les institutions et personnalités mentionnées le sont à titre indicatif. Ces institutions et personnalités mentionnées seront incessamment invitées à contribuer à la réalisation du Forum.

[Lire la suite](#)



Le Royaume-Uni a quitté le projet Erasmus à cause des piètres compétences en langues des Britanniques

Le Royaume-Uni a décidé de quitter le programme européen d'échanges étudiants Erasmus+ en raison des faibles compétences en langues étrangères des Britanniques, ce qui rendait l'adhésion du pays trop coûteuse à justifier selon un haut fonctionnaire britannique.

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Réunion à Québec du groupe de réflexion pour l'UNESCO sur le numérique (Communiqué de la Fédération internationale des coalitions pour la diversité culturelle)

La semaine dernière, la première séance de travail d'un groupe de réflexion composé de 18 expert(e)s internationaux s'est tenue à Québec. Ce groupe, mandaté par l'UNESCO, a pour mission de produire des recommandations visant à protéger et promouvoir la diversité des expressions culturelles dans l'environnement numérique.

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	<p style="text-align: center;">la politique linguistique au Maroc passée au peigne fin</p> <p>Rabat - Les participants à une journée d'étude organisée mercredi à la Chambre des conseillers ont débattu des fondements et défis de la politique linguistique au Maroc, en relation avec les grands enjeux du développement et de la société du savoir. Initiée par le groupe de travail thématique ad-hoc sur les politiques linguistiques au Maroc, cette journée d'étude vient...</p> <p>Lire la suite...</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Umorismo e plurilinguismo alla finale di Linguissimo a Bellinzona</p> <p>Di Forum Helveticum-1 Giugno 2024 23 giovani talenti della scrittura, provenienti da tutta la Svizzera, si preparano a partecipare alla sedicesima finale del Concorso nazionale di scrittura LINGUISSIMO. L'evento, organizzato dal Forum Helveticum, si svolgerà l'1 e il 2 giugno 2024 presso la Biblioteca cantonale di Bellinzona. La finale sarà dedicata al tema dell'umorismo e...</p> <p>Lire la suite...</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">L'invention de la Renaissance L'humaniste, le prince et l'artiste - exposition à la BNF Richelieu Paris jusqu'au 16 juin 2024</p> <p>L'invention de la Renaissance L'humaniste, le prince et l'artiste Expositions 20 fév. 2024 Until 16 juin. 2024 BNF Richelieu Galerie Mansart - galerie Pigott Entre le XIVe et le XVIe siècle, l'Europe connaît un renouveau intellectuel, artistique et scientifique sans précédent. Désignée plus tard sous le nom d'«... Lire la suite...</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Qu'y a-t-il dans un mot? Comment le langage moins genré s'en sort à travers l'Europe</p> <p>Un vote controversé au Sénat français n'est que le dernier épisode de cette guerre culturelle autour du langage inclusif. La dernière escarmouche dans la guerre culturelle du langage inclusif s'est déroulée la première semaine du novembre dernier en France, où le Sénat a voté en faveur d'une proposition qui vise à interdire l'utilisation de termes moins genrés dans les documents...</p> <p>Lire la suite...</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Les États membres snobent Pedro Sánchez et son projet de transformation du catalan, du galicien et du basque en langues officielles de l'UE</p> <p>Que de l'eau froide de la part des États membres de l'Union européenne, qui ont banalisé la demande ambitieuse réalisée par le Premier ministre espagnol Pedro Sánchez. Sánchez a demandé pour trois langues régionales du pays (à savoir, le catalan, le galicien et le basque) à être officialisées comme langues de l'UE. Néanmoins, pendant une rencontre ministérielle tenue à...</p> <p>Lire la suite...</p>

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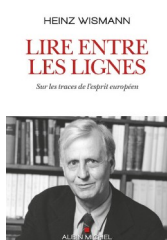
Announcements and publications



Bernard Cerquiglini : "La langue anglaise n'existe pas, c'est du français mal prononcé" (Gallimard, Folio)

Langue officielle et commune de l'Angleterre médiévale durant plusieurs siècles, le français a pourvu l'anglais d'un vocabulaire immense et surtout crucial. Traversant la Manche avec Guillaume le Conquérant, ...

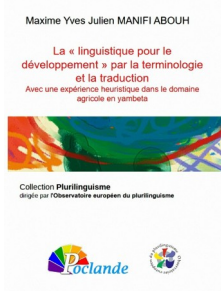
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Lire entre les lignes - Heinz Wismann

Heinz Wismann aime la philosophie et la musique, la philologie et le football, Héraclite et Kant, la France et l'Allemagne, et il n'aime rien tant que penser, non pas seulement en français ou en allemand, en grec ou en latin, mais bien entre les langues, entre les lignes. C'est là qu'il évolue, en funambule, et fait de la capacité de se tenir à l'écart de soi un art de vivre et...

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La « linguistique pour le développement » par la terminologie et la traduction (Maxime Yves Julien MANIFI ABOUH, Collection Plurilinguisme)

La « linguistique pour le développement » par la terminologie et la traduction : avec une expérience heuristique dans le domaine agricole en yambeta Cet ouvrage traite de la « linguistique pour le développement » (LpD), un nouveau champ de recherche interdisciplinaire en sciences du langage. Il s'agit d'une linguistique d'intervention dont l'objectif prioritaire n'est pas...

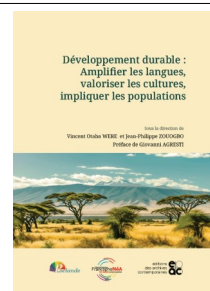
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Sociolinguistique insulaire : avantages et désavantages d'être une île (Ksenija DJORDJEVIC, Fabio SCETTI & Jean Léo LEONARD, collection Plurilinguisme)

Organisé en trois axes fondamentaux (dynamiques sociolinguistiques insulaires ; langues en contact ; pratiques et terrains), cet ouvrage collectif trilingue (français, anglais, espagnol) montre combien les îles sont des territoires souvent dotés d'une complexité qui n'a rien à envier aux espaces continentaux, d'autant plus que ce sont des lieux à la fois...




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Développement durable : Amplifier les langues. Valoriser les cultures. Impliquer les populations

Sustainable development : Promoting languages. Leveraging cultures. Working with populations Sous la direction de Vincent Otaba WERE et Jean-Philippe ZOUOGBO / Actes du 3e congrès du réseau international Poclande., 27, 28 et 29 octobre 2021, Kenyatta University, Nairobi. Editions des archives contemporaines, Paris. Ouvrage en Open Access : ...

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	<p align="center">La jeunesse, actrice de la Francophonie du 21ème siècle</p> <p>A la veille du Sommet de Villers Cotterêts, que pensent les jeunes de la francophonie ? Le Think Tank International I-Dialogos et Agora francophone posent 4 questions à des jeunes (14-30 ans) de la planète francophone. => https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Vu97yEM_p3LQYNUxKA5CMWnU3rg32jyF/view?usp=share_link</p>
	<p align="center">Simposio Internacioinal: Lengua, identidad y racismo: un enfoque lingüístico / Language, identity and racism: a linguistic approach (5-6 septiembere 2024)</p> <p>El campo emergente de la raciolingüística ha crecido rápidamente en las últimas décadas, y el mundo de habla hispana ha sido el escenario de algunos de los debates más apasionantes que giran en torno al tema. El trabajo realizado en este ámbito por lingüistas como Jonathan Rosa (2017, 2019), Nelson Flores (2017) y Virginia Zavala (2019, 2020, 2022) ... Leer más</p>
	<p align="center">Congreso Internacional "Bilingüismo, Educación bilingüe y Conflicto social (sociolingüístico/político)" (BIUNED 2024, 14-15 noviembre 2024)</p> <p>En el año 2018 se decidió desde el grupo de investigación Lengua y Sociedad de la UNED organizar una serie de congresos internacionales bienales sobre bilingüismo y multilingüismo brindando así a los investigadores la oportunidad de presentar investigaciones innovadoras y, eventualmente, provocar cambios positivos en el mundo académico y en la sociedad en general. Leer más</p>
	<p align="center">Vers un curriculum plurilingue : favoriser la communication pluriculturelle à l'ère du numérique (Bordeaux, 28-30 novembre 2024)</p> <p>Ce colloque international s'inscrit dans une approche pluridisciplinaire des langues et des cultures (didactique des langues au sens international d'<i>applied linguistics</i>), convoquant plus particulièrement les sciences du langage, la sociolinguistique, les sciences de l'éducation, les sciences politiques et l'info-com. Lire la suite...</p>
	<p align="center">Recherche-action en terminologie et alphabétisation pour la promotion du développement inclusif et durable en Afrique (appel à communication, 8 au 13 septembre 2024)</p> <p>Le présent colloque intervient dans un contexte particulier où des pays de l'Afrique décident de s'affranchir de la domination des langues coloniales en focalisant sur l'utilisation des langues africaines dans les secteurs vitaux de l'Etat. Dans la plupart des pays d'Afrique francophone notamment, l'alphabétisation a du plomb dans les ailes en raisons de multiples facteurs qu'il convient d'inventorier Lire la suite...</p>
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