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Food fight: Conflicting language ideologies in English and French news and social media

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Abstract:

Although social media provide new opportunities for minority language use and communication, the extent to which they differ from mainstream news media requires more investigation. This paper addresses this issue by comparing French and English language ideologies in Canadian news media and on Twitter. These ideologies are investigated using a specific case study where an Italian restaurant owner in French-speaking Canada was challenged for using Italian words on a menu. This generated extensive media coverage and Twitter activity. A corpus-assisted discourse study sheds light on the complex dynamics of language politics and how they play out on different media platforms. It also indicates that minoritised groups are under growing pressure to translate linguistic cultures into English and globalised, market-driven contexts.

Keywords: language ideologies; news media; social media; Canada; Twitter

Introduction

In a recent report, the Canadian Senate Committee on Official Languages acknowledged that social media pose new challenges for language rights. While the Committee's (2012) report observed the need for greater presence of French online, arguably of equal importance are the representations of languages online. Language representations can be used as a barometer, indicating the evolving ideological and discursive ecologies in which policies exist and to which they must adjust. Furthermore, although social media provide new opportunities for language use and for communication more generally, the extent to which they differ from more traditional news media is unclear. Canadian news media have traditionally existed along parallel lines in English and French and these divisions could indeed be reproduced in Canadian social media, with concomitant divisions in terms of the language ideologies embedded in these media. Furthermore, as English continues to be the international language of communication, interactions between international English language media and Canadian national English-language media should not be underestimated. Thus, the aim of this paper is to compare trends in news and social media representations, English-medium and French-medium representations, and national and international language ideologies. With this basis, the aim is also to gauge the 'barometer' capacity of social media, i.e. their status as indicators

of new and evolving language policy contexts. To examine these issues, data are examined from media focusing on a specific ‘language ideological debate’ (Blommaert 1999) in Quebec known as ‘Pastagate’.

In February 2013, inspectors from the *Office québécois de la langue française* (OQLF) sent a warning letter to the owner of the Buonanotte restaurant in Montreal for its use of Italian words such as ‘pasta’ and ‘bottiglia’ on its menus. When the owner tweeted a photo of the letter to his followers, it was picked up by local journalists and activist groups, which shared links to the story over social media several thousand times within the first day of the story breaking. The story was picked up by international news media and reported in as many as 14 countries and in a variety of different languages (Wyatt 2013). The negativity of international news and social media has been argued to have contributed to the resignation of the OQLF head Louise Marchand, the revision of OQLF complaint procedures, and the abandonment of Bill 14, which proposed changes to Quebec’s Charter of the French Language. With relation to this context, the following research questions are addressed:

- How are languages represented in news articles, news commentary, and retweets of the news stories focusing on ‘Pastagate’?
- Do representations differ according to the country of origin (Canada, US, UK, France)?
- Do representations differ across languages (English, French)?

This paper proceeds as follows: section two outlines the theoretical concepts of language ideologies and moral panics in the media; section three presents the news and social data under investigation and the methods used for analysis; section four outlines the principle findings; and section five summarises the conclusions.

Context

The fact that ‘Pastagate’ had rather sudden and direct effects on Quebec’s language policy demonstrates that language policies do not exist in isolation. Policies may be taken up to varying degrees depending on what Schiffman (2006) has called ‘linguistic culture’. Linguistic culture refers to the ‘sum totality of ideas, values, beliefs, attitudes, prejudices, myths, religious strictures, and all the other cultural ‘baggage’ that speakers bring to their dealings with language from their culture’ (Schiffman 2006, 112). Linguistic culture does not imply that culture resides *in* language (e.g. in grammar) but rather than language tends to be used as a vehicle to communicate the beliefs of linguistic communities (i.e. communities

delineated by language use) (Schiffman 2006, 121). In other words, policies may be understood and taken up to different extents if languages themselves are understood differently within communities, and especially if these communities tend not to share a common language. In order to effect change in understandings about languages, it has been suggested (Lo Bianco 2005) that concomitant with status, corpus and acquisition planning should be discourse planning: the planning of discursive constructions of languages in public discourse (Hult 2010: 158). The need for such planning is that uptake of policy depends on discourses on the ground, which require at least some degree of language management.

In Canada, the coexistence of official language policies (i.e. the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Constitution Act 1982, s. 33) and the Official Languages Act (R.S.C. 1985, c. 31 (4th Supp)), which institute the official status of English and French) and multiculturalism policies (i.e. the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, R.S.C. 1985, c. 24 (4th Supp.)) explicitly denaturalises one-to-one relationships between languages and cultures. Nevertheless, the notion of ‘two solitudes’ has been used to describe a Canadian divide based not only on language, but also on culture (e.g. Heller 1999, 143). Thus, it is possible that Canada’s language policies are implemented within distinct ‘linguistic cultures’. Indeed, the distinction between English speakers and French speakers is arguably reinforced by the fact that the majority of Canada’s population claims to have English as a first language (57%), whereas only 21.2% claim to speak French as a first language and 87% of this population lives in the province of Quebec. In Quebec, the population is governed by an additional language policy, the *Charter of the French Language* (R.S.Q. c. C-11; henceforth, ‘Charter’), which is known in English as ‘Bill 101’; this is in place to protect and promote French in the province. Within these arguably distinct populations, beliefs and understandings about languages (i.e. ‘language ideologies’) may circulate through different mediums (i.e. English and French) and may affect the uptake of language policies.

Theoretical framework

Beliefs and understandings about languages have been widely studied in news media (Johnson and Ensslin 2007; Johnson and Milani 2010), although to a much lesser extent in the Canadian context. News media are understood to be a particularly valuable site for the study of language ideologies because they are places where public figures contribute to metalinguistic arguments about language and as literal texts they embody a particular ideology of orthography, syntax and usage (DiGiacomo 1999, 105). Also, news media are the product of the news producing community, where ideologies of language are part of

journalistic practice (see Cotter 2010). The news media have also been credited with the creation of ‘moral panics’ (e.g. Cohen 1972) in society – and in particular moral panics focusing on language issues (e.g. Cameron 1995; Johnson 1999). Moral panics have been described as ‘supposedly emanating from the ever-increasing moral laxity within our society’ and they tend to involve the following successive stages: (1) something or someone is defined as a threat to values or interests; (2) this threat is depicted in an easily recognisable form by the media; (3) there is a rapid build-up of public concern; (4) there is a response from authorities or opinion-makers; and (5) the panic recedes or results in social changes (Johnson 1999, 2).

Moral panics in the news relate to what Fowler (1994, 91) has called ‘hysteria’: ‘behaviour which attains autonomy, which sustains itself as an expressive performance, independent of its causes’. In other words, these are ‘pseudo-events’ – events that are only real insofar as they become topics within the media (Boorstin 1961, cited in Cotter 2010, 111) that become real ‘discursive events’ (Fairclough 2010, 94). When such discursive events focus on language and evolve into moral panics, these are forms of ‘language ideological debates’ (Blommaert 1999, 1). In other words, the media become sites and platforms for individuals to voice their language ideologies, i.e. make explicit beliefs and understandings about languages that more often tend to be taken for granted and understood as common sense (Woolard 1998, 27).

When moral panics about language evolve, they often involve metaphoric arguments about language and society that draw on language ideologies (Cameron 1995; Johnson 1999). However, according to a constructivist approach, the extent to which ideologies can evolve into moral panics depends on the interests of a particular group in promoting a problem, the resources available to them, the ownership that they secure over the issue, and the degree to which their analyses of the issue are accepted as authoritative (Jenkins 1992, 3, cited in Johnson 1999, 21-2). Thus, the creation of a moral panic may be contingent on the extent to which branches of the media grant particular groups the time and space to air their views to specific audiences. Furthermore, in order for an issue to develop into a moral panic, a common language is arguably required to communicate the story to a wider audience.

In a globalised world, transnational forums on Web 2.0 offer new and unprecedented opportunities for communication, interaction, and the development of minoritised and even endangered languages (see e.g. Leppänen and Häkkinen 2012, 18). Nevertheless, the English language continues to have an important role as a medium of communication in international media. In addition, English is also one of the official languages of Canada alongside French,

and historically Canadian media developed along parallel lines in English and French (Raboy 1991). Web 2.0 provides affordances to minoritised languages and indeed more opportunities for Canadian English and French speakers to bridge the previously established ‘two solitudes’ gap that has been reinforced by the news media. However, it remains unclear if these affordances and opportunities are being drawn on by users. The extent to which new and social media differ from traditional news media also remains unclear, and whether these are simply being used to further the divide to a wider audience. Indeed, the fact that English Canadian media have ready access to an international English-speaking media audience suggests that English Canadians have greater capacity to propagate a ‘moral panic’. To explore the extent of this capacity, comparisons of national and international, news and social, and English and French media are required.

Data and methods

Online news articles were collected for analysis according to language (English and French), their place of publication (Canada, the United States, Britain, and France), the scope of their readership (e.g. national and international news), and their focus on the ‘Pastagate’ story. More specifically, the *Globe and Mail* and the *National Post* newspapers are Canada’s only two English-language national (i.e. national market) newspapers and both have some of Canada’s highest average weekday circulation figures (*National Post*, 163,063; *Globe and Mail*, 346,485; Newspapers Canada 2013). In the United States, FoxNews.com is an English-language online news source linked to the Fox News cable and satellite news television network and is the sixth most frequently visited news website internationally (ebizmba.com). *National Public Radio* (henceforth *NPR*) is a national syndicator of public radio stations in the United States and ranks 669 on the Alexa Global Rank of most-visited websites in 2014 (alexa.com). The *Guardian* is a British newspaper and its website is the tenth most popular news site internationally (ebizmba.com). Finally, the *Economist* is a news magazine based in London; its website had an average of 7,860,671 unique monthly visits in 2012 (Auditedmedia.com). In French, *La Presse* is the most widely-read French newspaper in Canada, with an average weekday circulation of 241,659 (Canadian Newspapers 2013). *Le Devoir* is an elite Quebec newspaper with an average weekday readership of only 35,158 (Canadian Newspapers 2013). *Le Huffington Post Québec* is the French branch of the online news website of Huffington Post. *Radio Canada* is the French arm of the Canadian national public broadcaster. Finally, the *Nouvel Observateur* is a weekly French newsmagazine and the third most frequently consulted website for French information with 6,911,000 website

hits in April 2014 (Mediaobs 2014). One article focusing on Pastagate was selected from each of these sites (see Table 1).

Table 1 *Selection of international news articles*

For Peer Review

	Author	News source	Country	Date of publication	Web source
English data	Canadian Press	The Globe and Mail	Canada	08.03.2013	http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/quebecs-language-watchdog-head-steps-down-after-pastagate/article9513486/
	Nelson Wyatt	National Post	Canada	26.02.2013	http://news.nationalpost.com/2013/02/26/quebecs-pastagate-pr-nightmare-story-gets-60-times-more-coverage-outside-province-than-marois-investment-trip/
	Bill Chappell	NPR	USA	26.02.2013	http://www.npr.org/blogs/theway/2013/02/26/172982758/pastagate-quebec-agency-criticized-for-targeting-foreign-words-on-menus
	(no author)	Fox News	USA	22.02.2013	http://www.foxnews.com/leisure/2013/02/22/canadian-restaurant-told-pasta-should-be-in-french/
	(no author)	The Economist	UK	11.03.2013	http://www.economist.com/blogs/johnson/2013/03/language-policy
	Allan Woods	The Guardian	UK	01.03.2013	http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/mar/01/quebec-language-police-ban-pasta
French data	(no author)	Huffington Post	Canada	18.10.2013	http://quebec.huffingtonpost.ca/2013/10/18/oqlf-modernise-pratiques-plaintes_n_4122643.html
	Émilie Bilodeau	La Presse	Canada	20.02.2013	http://www.lapresse.ca/actualites/montreal/201302/20/01-4623777-le-mot-pasta-cause-un-exces-de-zele.php
	Guillaume Bourgault-Côté	Le Devoir	Canada	08.03.2013	http://www.ledevoir.com/politique/quebec/372805/presidente-de-l-oqlf-louise-marchand-quitte-son-poste
	(no author)	Radio Canada	Canada	21.02.2013	http://www.radio-canada.ca/nouvelles/societe/2013/02/21/002-oqlf-buonanotte-plainte.shtml
	Daniel Girard	Nouvel Observateur	France	26.02.2013	http://leplus.nouvelobs.com/contribution/789937-francophonie-quand-le-gouvernement-quebecois-fait-dans-l-exces-de-zele.html

In addition, all publically-available online comments on these articles were collected from the news websites. In addition, the headlines generated by news websites through retweeting (i.e. the headline generated when the reader clicks the Twitter icon on a news story webpage to retweet) were entered into Twitter and all publically-available Tweets citing these articles were collected for analysis (see Tables 2 and 3).

Table 2 *International English-language news articles, comments, Tweets, and word counts*

Article	Number	Word count	Comments	Commentary word count	Tweets	Twitter word count
The Globe and Mail	1	732	92	3741	31	583
National Post	1	679	525	14794	25	490
NPR	1	612	40	1795	99	1775
Fox News	1	262	4	81	9	192
The Economist	1	618	295	19860	140	2627
The Guardian	1	764	539	14525	247	4814
Totals	6	3667	1495	54796	551	10481

Table 3 *International French-language news articles, comments, Tweets, and word counts*

Article	Number	Word count	Comments	Commentary word count	Tweets	Twitter word count
Huffington Post	1	450	24	553	11	248
La Presse	1	394	0	0	44	1005
Le Devoir	1	577	16	1051	21	484
Radio Canada Nouvel	1	551	160	7349	12	247
Observateur	1	843	10	1015	10	220
Totals	5	2815	210	9968	98	2204

Data was analysed using a form of cross-linguistic corpus-assisted discourse analysis (Vessey 2013) adapted for the different languages and genres within the dataset. For the corpus component of the analysis, data were analysed according to frequency and concordances. Words of high and low frequency are understood to indicate topics that are particularly

salient (or not) within a dataset (Stubbs 2001, 166). A high frequency of references to ‘French’, for example, could suggest that this language is topical within a dataset, especially if this frequency is compared with that of another word (e.g. ‘Italian’). Also, words that tend to ‘collocate’ (or co-locate in proximity to one another) are understood to indicate semantic relationships between words and may suggest the broader contexts in which a topic is being discussed. Semi-fixed phrases in the form of ‘clusters’ also indicate how these semantic relationships become fixed in labels or representations.

Since tweets consist of a maximum of only 140 characters and they tend to be highly repetitive (Zappavigna 2012), the Twitter data was studied primarily in terms of non-verbatim retweeting (e.g. original user content) and hashtags. Hashtags play a particularly important role in Twitter as user-generated searchable tags that have predominantly evaluative functions (Zappavigna 2012); these were analysed according to frequency and ostensible topicality.

Finally, the discourse analysis began by establishing which categories of lexical items dominated each article with the aim of identifying lexical chains (e.g. hyponyms, synonyms, metonyms) that contributed to the cohesion of articles (Halliday and Hasan 1976). In addition, representations of languages were studied in both articles and comments and analyses focused on the extent to which languages were represented as descriptors of people, institutions, or locations, on the one hand, or stand-alone objects with or without agentive power, on the other. Above all, all analyses are comparative in terms of language (English/French), source country, and genre (news/social media). The next section first outlines findings from the news articles, then the commentary, and finally the Twitter data. Section five outlines the findings in relation to the research questions.

Findings

News article findings

The analysis, which began with the discourse analysis of English articles, indicated that the themes of *control*, *negativity*, *international contexts* and *business* permeate these data. For example, the *Globe and Mail* article uses adjectives such as *embarrassing*, *undesired*, *bitter*, *damning*, *[not] proud*, *aggressive*, and *dwindling* and nouns such as *ridicule*, *symptom*, *controversy*, *incidents*, *headache*, *problem*, *difficulty*, and *consequences*. The article also thematises control by repeatedly referring to the OQLF as the ‘language watchdog’ (4

instances), which ‘enforce[s] Quebec’s language law’. The OQLF is imbued with the more general themes of negativity and control, as in Example 1.

Ex. 1 *Globe and Mail*

The head of Quebec’s language watchdog agency has resigned after a series of controversies that created embarrassing headlines at home and abroad.

Similarly, the Fox News article evokes a highly monitored society through the use of words such as *strict, rules, forced, enforces, and police*; these dimensions of control are mocked throughout the article, as in: ‘All this ribbing caused the language police to eat their words’. The *Guardian* article also focuses on the controlling nature of Quebec, mentioning powerful social actors (e.g. *inspectors, police, transgressors, spy agency, top-court judge*), controlling actions (*protect, deploy, rein in, take on, conduct spot checks, break the law, force, undercut, order, wield the power, crackdown*) and general negativity (*scrutiny, complaints, picking a fight, outrage, unleash, tempest, outcry, frustrations, sinister, plot, perfect storm, failed, threatened, cacophony, severe*). The theme of control permeates the *Economist*, too, which uses negative adjectives (e.g. [not] *good, ridiculous, serious, not easy, bad*) and negative nouns (e.g. *ridicule, warning, violation, fine, incident, issue, distraction*) to thematise controlling actions (e.g. *forced, instructed, tussled, barraged, preserving, needed, toughen*). Finally, in *NPR*, the theme of control is again salient, with words such as *enforce, rules, guard, allowed, stricken, infractions, allowed, and police*. The negative depiction of such control becomes clear with nouns such as *criticism, disbelief, outrage, barrage, complaints, problem, flap, and debate* and adjectives such as *serious, sad, depressed, and wrong*.

The juxtaposition of local and international contexts is also an undercurrent in these articles. For example, the Buonanotte restaurant is represented as ‘trendy’ (*National Post*) and popular with internationally-renown celebrities (e.g. Leonardo DiCaprio, Robert De Niro, Bono, Rihanna, Jerry Seinfeld, cited in Fox News and the *Guardian*). More generally, the OQLF – and Quebec more generally – tend to be juxtaposed with an international, English-speaking context, as in Example 1. Journalists from the *Globe and Mail*, *NPR*, and *National Post* all stress the impact of international reporting of this story. In fact, the *National Post* article focuses on this topic and repeats the international media figures three times. First, the figures are cited in the headline (see Ex. 2).

Ex. 2 *National Post*

Quebec's 'pastagate' PR nightmare: Story gets 60 times more coverage outside province than Marois investment trip.

Then, the figures are mentioned twice in the article. Also, the *National Post* reinforces the importance of the international context (e.g. 'outside the province', 'trip', 'foreign', 'out-of-province', '14 countries' and '160 countries'), naming specific international destinations (e.g. New York, Australia) and using lexical and numerical quantification that stress the impact of news reporting (e.g. *multiplied, 60 times, significantly, 350, all, 12, 160, a period of, few months*).

Against such an influential international context, Quebec and its language laws seem rather marginalised. Indeed, the *Economist* seems to underscore this status, describing Quebec as 'barraged with English from *the rest of Canada* and from *the United States*' (emphasis added). Quebec is depicted as marginalised not only within 'a world where English is the language of business' but also within the country: 'Quebec [is] a former French colony conquered by Britain before it became part of Canada'. Similarly, the *Guardian* article seems to marginalise Quebec by indirectly contrasting the '*regional Quebec government*' with '*big corporate transgressors*' and '*celebrity clientele*'. More specifically, the journalist discursively amalgamates 'anglophones', 'ethnic communities', and 'English-speaking entrepreneurs and businesses' in Quebec with 'English voices in North America' more generally and contrasts this diverse and widespread group with 'French-language advocates and Quebec separatists'.

Alongside these other themes, there is also an emphasis on the importance of business. Although a focus on the Buonanotte restaurant and other restaurants, too, is unsurprising given the immediate context of Pastagate, most articles mention business more generally (e.g. 'other businesses', 'a business', 'companies', 'business owners', 'business partner', 'entrepreneurs and businesses', 'small companies', 'corporate transgressors'). Additionally, both the *Globe and Mail* and the *National Post* cite De Courcy's statement about the negative impact of the story on 'businesses, the Office personnel, the public and Quebec in general'. The *Economist* and *National Post* mention the Quebec Premier's (unsuccessful) efforts to drum up 'investor interest' and while the *Economist* notes that 'English is the language of business', the *National Post* suggests that the international media coverage could have an impact on 'business decisions'.

In contrast, *control*, *negativity*, *international contexts* and *business* are not dominant themes in the French news articles. The *Radio Canada* article discusses control to some extent, describing the use of foreign words on menus as ‘allowed’ (*permis*) but they ‘must not’ be dominant or replace the French (*ne doivent pas être prédominants ni remplacer les descriptions et explications en français*). Nevertheless, the majority of the article focuses on corrections and clarifications – that is, changes – being made to the OQLF procedures. For example, it is noted that the OQLF published a statement to ‘clarify’ (*clarifier*) its position and to ‘admit’ (*constater*) that the inspectors had been ‘overzealous’. It also includes a statement from De Courcy, the Minister responsible for the Charter of the French Language, who stresses that ‘judgement and moderation’ (*jugement et moderation*) must be what guide the OQLF and she is ‘confident’ in the expertise and work of the institution (*j’ai raison de faire confiance à l’expertise et à la qualité du travail réalisé*).

Similarly, *Le Devoir* explains that the Marois government ‘changed tack’ (*a donné coup de barre*) on the OQLF following the departure of Marchand, who left her post following the Pastagate controversy. The article continues to note ‘change’ (*changement*) and ‘review’ (*révision*) and the ‘creation’ (*création*) of a new post dealing with OQLF service and quality. In *La Presse*, the actions of the OQLF are represented negatively as an ‘error’ (*erreur*), but the focus of the article is mainly on subsequent changes to OQLF procedures. Similarly, the *Huffington Post* thematises change, using verb tenses (e.g. past and future) and temporal markers (e.g. ‘until now’/ *jusqu’ici*, ‘now’/ *maintenant*, ‘from now on’/ *à compter d’aujourd’hui*) to note developments in the OQLF. There is not, however, a contrast between negativity in the past and positivity for the future, because it is noted that historically the OQLF treated complaints ‘consistently and equally in the same way’ (*de manière égale et uniforme*) and now out of a ‘concern for efficiency’ (*souci d’efficacité*) the OQLF is developing a personal follow-up approach (*faire un suivi personnalisé auprès des personnes touchées*), addressing general and collective interests (*l’intérêt general ou collectif*), and improving the quality of services (*l’amélioration de la qualité des services*).

In contrast, the *Nouvel Observateur* is much more negative in its representation of events and it also thematises the international context. For example, the author notes that whereas the Pastagate scandal was a source of ‘amusement’ and ‘derision’ (*dérision*) for the international public, such issues ‘often preoccupy’ francophones overseas (see Example 3)

Ex. 3 *Nouvel Observateur*

Dérive ou vrai débat ? Retour sur ces petites affaires qui animent beaucoup certains francophones outre-atlantique.

[Downward spiral or real debate? Returning to these little affairs that often preoccupy some francophones overseas.]

The contrast between a marginalised ‘overseas’ group and the international public represents francophones as isolated internationally. Furthermore, the journalist negatively evaluates the Quebec government as ‘poorly adapted’ and ‘narrow-minded’ within an international context of globalisation and migration (see Ex. 4).

Ex. 4 *Nouvel Observateur*

Ces pratiques bureaucratiques absurdes donnent plutôt l'image d'un gouvernement étroit d'esprit et inadapté à la mondialisation. Elles découragent l'intégration des immigrants plutôt que de la faciliter.

[These absurd bureaucratic practices rather give an image of a narrow-minded government that is poorly adapted for globalisation. They discourage immigrant integration rather than facilitating it.]

The theme of control also figures in the journalist’s account of a restaurant owner being required (*a dû*) to cover the English on his telephone and the PQ government believing it ‘must’ (*il faut*) act to ‘brake’ (*freiner*) the growth of English and ‘reinforce’ (*renforcer*) the Charter of the French language. Thus, this article is rather distinct from the other French-language articles in its thematisation of control, internationalisation and negativity.

The second step in the analysis was to establish how languages were being represented within the articles. In the English articles, the French language is discussed most frequently, whereas English and Italian occur less frequently. Language more generally, though, tends to be the topic of discussion (see Table 4).

Table 3 *References to languages in English articles*

	French (French/ <i>francophone/s</i>)	Langue <i>français/e</i> <i>français/ e</i>	English (English, <i>anglophone/s</i>)	Language (language/s, <i>linguistic/s</i>)	Ita- lian	Other
National	2	2	1	7	3	0

Post						
The Guardian	9	1	10	9	5	0
The Economist	9	1	6	7	2	0
National Public Radio	10	0	2	8	2	0
Fox News	2	2	0	2	5	0
Globe and Mail	5	1	4	10	1	0
TOTALS	37	7	23	43	18	0

In most cases (18 instances), ‘Italian’ is used to describe the Buonanotte restaurant or the words or terms used on the menu (i.e. the words that were objected to by the OQLF). Thus, there is no mention of Italian outside of restaurants and Italian speakers do not figure in the articles. The English language, which is discussed more frequently (23 occurrences), is represented as a humanised language. For example, there are six references to ‘anglophone/s’ (in the *Guardian*, *Globe and Mail*, and *National Post*) and references to ‘English-speakers’, ‘English-speaking’ entrepreneurs and populations, and ‘English voices’. Other references to ‘English’ suggest the diverse contexts in which English is used (e.g. it is an international language: ‘in a world where English is the language of business’ [*Economist*]).

The English language articles discuss French speakers less frequently than English speakers: there are only five references to ‘francophones’ and no references to ‘French speakers’ or ‘French voices’. There are two instances where people are described as ‘being’ French (meaning, in these cases, French-speaking), but these in fact come from a restaurateur whose restaurant was targeted in OQLF investigations similar to those of Pastagate (see Example 5, emphasis added).

Ex. 5 NPR

‘I love Quebec... but it’s not getting any easier,’ David McMillan, owner of Montreal’s Joe Beef, tells National Post. McMillan speaks both English and French. ‘*My wife is French, my business partner is French, my children go to French school, but I just get so sad and depressed and wonder, what’s wrong with these people?*’

Although the restaurateur humanises the French language by using it as a descriptor of his wife and business partner, he then distinguishes them from other French speakers (‘these

people’), who reportedly have something ‘wrong’ with them. In other words, the French language is not humanised in the same way as the English language is in the English articles.

Finally, references to LANGUAGE tend to be used to refer to language policies or institutions rather than to human or individual issues, and these tend to be negatively evaluated. The negative evaluation takes shape at the most basic level with the labelling employed by journalists: the *Globe and Mail* refers to the OQLF as the ‘language watchdog’ (4 instances) and all other articles use the label ‘language police’ (8 instances). The *Economist* explains that OQLF inspectors are ‘known in English’ as the ‘language police’, but later the journalist uses the term ‘language police’ without reference to the fact that this label is only meaningful to one linguistic community. Thus, the journalist (perhaps) unwittingly aligns with an English-speaking readership and perpetuates the negative representation of the OQLF as the ‘language police’. All other uses of the label ‘language police’ fail to indicate that this is a term used (predominantly) by English speakers (i.e. and not French speakers). Indeed, the *Guardian* journalist uses the passive voice to contend that ‘[t]hey are known as the language police’, without indicating *by whom* they are known. The negative connotations associated with this label are reinforced by depictions of their aggressive military-style actions (e.g. ‘deploys’, ‘rein in’, ‘take on’, ‘conduct spot checks’). The *Guardian* also describes OQLF inspectors as ‘zealots’, and the negative fanaticism associated with this label is in keeping with representations in other articles. For example, *NPR* discusses ‘the government’s efforts to *cleanse* [restaurants] of languages other than French’ (emphasis added). Since ‘cleansing’ pertains to purification, this description implies that other languages are perceived to be impure and even dirty by the government. Indeed, in addition to cleaning and beauty regimes, ‘cleansing’ also tends to be used within discussions of genocide (e.g. ‘ethnic cleansing’). Thus, *NPR*’s use of ‘cleanse’ is arguably part of an overall depiction of Quebec’s language policy as extremist.

In the French articles, the languages most under discussion are French, Italian, and English, respectively (see Table 5).

Table 4 *Frequencies of references to language(s)*

French (<i>français/e/s,</i> <i>francophone/s,</i> <i>franciser/</i> <i>francisation</i>)	English (<i>anglais/e/s,</i> <i>anglophone/s,</i> <i>angliciser/</i> <i>anglicisation</i>)	Language (<i>langue/s,</i> <i>linguistique/s</i>)	Italian (<i>italien/ne/s</i>)	Other (<i>grec</i>)
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Nouvel Observateur	16	6	6	6	0
La Presse	4	0	4	4	0
Radio Canada	10	0	7	4	2
Huffington Post	3	2	2	2	0
Le Devoir	3	1	5	2	0
TOTALS	36	9	24	18	2

The Italian language is the second-most frequently discussed language, but most references to *italien* refer to the Buonanotte restaurant (e.g. *restaurant italien*) and ‘Italian words’ (e.g. *mots italiens*) or the ‘use of Italian’ (*l’usage de l’italien*) on menus. As with the English articles, then, the language itself is not really represented outside of restaurants, nor are speakers discussed. Similarly, there are notably few references to the English language in the articles. For example, the *La Presse* and *Radio Canada* articles do not contain any references to ‘English’ or ‘anglophones’ and the *Le Devoir* article only contains one reference. This refers to the fact that the original complaint that sparked the OQLF investigations into Buonanotte pertained to the use of English – not Italian – on the restaurant menu. The relevance of this point is that it is English, and not Italian, that is seen as relevant to discussions of French.

Finally, most references to both *langue* and *française* tend to refer to the Office Québécois de la *langue française* and the *Charte de la langue française* (Quebec’s *Charter of the French language*). In fact, 47% (or 17 instances) of *français/e/s* and 75% (or 19 instances) of *langue* refer to the Charter or the OQLF. Also, there are few references to francophones in the articles. Thus, similar to the English articles, there is a strong emphasis on Quebec language policy and less focus on French speakers. Nevertheless, there are also references to *francisation* (‘to make more French’), which occur in the *Nouvel Observateur* and the *Le Devoir* articles. For example, the *Nouvel Observateur* discusses cases where restaurants were required to ‘become more French’ through changes to menus and signage. Thus, the ‘objective of making more French’, which is part and parcel of Quebec’s language policy more generally, underpins descriptions of the actions and intentions of the OQLF and its requirements from the public. In other words, language policy seems to permeate the French articles not only in explicit ways (e.g. through references to the OQLF and the Charter), but also through the vocabulary used – and the fact that the act of ‘making things more French’ (i.e. *franciser*, *francisation*) is used so unproblematically by the journalists in question.

News commentary findings

Following the analysis of the news articles, the news commentary was examined in order to determine if the journalists' representations were corroborated by reader comments. Notably, in English the articles that received the most comments were international publications: the *Guardian* (539 comments) and the *Economist* (19,860 words) (see Table 2). The high number of comments could be the result of the wider (and more active) readerships of these publications (see e.g. Marchi 2013), but the involvement of these audiences nevertheless indicates the international interest in and dissemination of the story.

The English commentary corpus contained 650 references to FRENCH and FRANCO* (FRANCOPHONE, 43, FRANCOPHONES, 41, FRANCAIS, 4, FRANÇAIS, 4, FRANÇAISE, 4, FRANCAISE, 3, FRANCO, 3), 480 references to ENGLISH and ANGLO* (ANGLO, 36, ANGLOPHONE, 32, ANGLOPHONES, 32, ANGLOS, 17), and only 53 references to ITALIAN/S. In other words, there is a much more concerted focus on the French and English rather than Italian. The most frequent three-word clusters also indicate some of the dominant trends in the data (see Table 6).

Table 5 10 most frequent clusters in English commentary

Cluster	Frequency
I DON T	40
THE LANGUAGE NAZIS	39
IT S NOT	30
THE FRENCH LANGUAGE	30
THE REST OF	30
THE LANGUAGE POLICE	26
IT S A	24
I M NOT	21
IN THE WORLD	21
OF THE WORLD	19

The most frequent cluster (I DON T) indicates the personal and subjective nature of the discussions in this forum, with participants claiming they don't 'understand' (2), 'believe' (2), 'see' (6) and 'know' (7). Other clusters, such as 'it's not', 'it's a', 'I'm not', 'is not a' and 'there is no' reveal the argumentative nature of this participant forum.

The second most frequent cluster is THE LANGUAGE NAZIS (39 occurrences) and the bigram LANGUAGE NAZI* is even more frequent (56 occurrences). Notably, 96% (54) of

these instances occur in comments on the *National Post* article and 93% (50) of these instances can be attributed to a single user. The (perhaps) less contentious label ‘language police’ (51 occurrences) is used in a broader range of news commentary: the *Economist* (24 instances), the *Guardian* (20 instances), the *National Post* (5 instances), and the *Globe and Mail* (2 instances). In some instances, commentators critique journalists’ use of this label; in Example 9, the commentator argues that the *Economist* journalist should have avoided using such as ‘nasty slur’.

Ex. 6 *Contestation of the journalists’ use of the term ‘language police’*

It’s a fun round-up, but I’m slightly appalled that a publication like The Economist thinks it’s acceptable to dub the OQLF as the ‘language police’ - a monicker coined and championed by the reactionary Quebecophobe right-wing press of the Rest of Canada. ‘Language police’ isn’t a neutral description of the OQLF, it’s a nasty slur.

However, other participants support the use of this term, explaining that the OQLF inspectors ‘have been called [this] for decades’ and ‘[f]rom a bilingual Anglophone living in Quebec, plain and simple; the OQLF is known as the language police’.

Other notable clusters, such as THE REST OF (30), IN THE WORLD (21), OF THE WORLD (19), and REST OF CANADA (13) suggest the extent to which the theme of internationalisation permeates this dataset. Subsets of the cluster THE REST OF (30), which include THE REST OF CANADA (12), THE REST OF THE WORLD (7), and THE REST OF THE COUNTRY (2), suggest that Quebec is often explicitly contrasted against other national (Canadian) and international contexts. Many of these explicitly frame Quebec negatively in such comparisons, as in one comment on the *Globe and Mail*, which laments ‘A pity Mordecai Richler is no longer around to describe such nonsense to the rest of the world’. Also, FRENCH collocates with QUEBEC (57), QUÉBÉCOIS (22), QUEBECERS (8), QUÉBÉCOIS (5), and QUÉBEC (5) but it collocates far less frequently with FRANCE (13), CANADIAN (11), ITALIAN (10), CANADA (10), CANADIANS (9), and GERMAN (6). Thus, French is discursively linked to the Quebec context and much less so to general Canadian and international contexts.

The most frequent cluster containing FRENCH is THE FRENCH LANGUAGE (30), which tends to be used to discuss policy and the rationale for French policy – that is, the need to ‘defend’, ‘protect’, and ‘promote’ French. Similarly, the bigram FRENCH IS shows that a

focus on – or debate over – French language endangerment preoccupies a number of participants, who discuss whether French is ‘safe’, ‘worth defending’, and ‘going the way of hundreds of other languages [towards a slow and steady demise]’ (see Table 7).

Table 6 *Selected concordance lines with FRENCH IS*

the major neighboring languages. **French is safe** in Switzerland because it is similar. Who cares if you think that **French is not worth defending**? The only factors (worse) need support to survive. **French is going the way of hundreds of other languages**. **How is it possible** then, that **french is endangered in Quebec**. It boggles the mind to step up when they **think French is being threatened**. That criterion ends it is a sterile debate. Fact **french is being protected**, or English is declining, it just strengthens the idea that **French is at risk** in Quebec. If (as that situation is) on its own. >> Much to Quebec's credit, **French is alive and well there**, even though

The focus on the wider context of French language endangerment indicates the overall lack of consensus about the status and wellbeing of the French language.

The language most under discussion in the French commentary is the French language, followed by English and then Italian (FRANÇAIS, 78; ANGLAIS, 29; ITALIEN, 25). The low frequencies of references to English and Italian mean that few patterns emerge from the data (e.g. there are no ANGLAIS or ITALIEN clusters). Most references to *anglais/e* occur within discussions of speaking (*parler*), writing (*écrire*), and ‘using’ (*utiliser*) English. Discussions of Italian, like in the articles, refer to words and terms and the menu containing Italian. French, however, is more topical in the commentary data. Discussions of French tend to express concern over the protection of French and its role in society. Many commentators express embarrassment over the Pastagate context and condemn the actions of the OQLF. For example, OQLF inspectors are in some cases labelled ‘ayatollah[s]’, ‘guardians’ (*gardien*), ‘police’, and ‘zealots’ (*zélotés*) *de la langue*, and one commentator in *Le Devoir* says ‘good riddance’ (*bon débarass*) to the exit of Louise Marchand. Nevertheless, many commentators argue that there is still a need to ‘defend’ (*défendre*) French and the ‘protection of’ (*protection de*) French is important. One comment on *Radio Canada* argues that French has ‘clearly regressed [...] in Montreal’ (*le français a nettement régressé [...] à Montréal*).

There are also commentators who use the platform to lament the decline of ‘proper’ French. The voicing of standard language ideologies occurred in both Canadian (e.g. *Radio Canada*) and international (e.g. *Nouvel Observateur*) news commentary. In Ex. 11, a commentator argues that more must be done to ensure the ‘quality of French’.

Ex. 11 (*Radio Canada*)

...De plus, au lieu de donner des leçons aux autres, nous ferions mieux de nous occuper de la QUALITÉ du français, dans nos écoles, nos entreprises. À voir des courriels qui circulent parfois, à fautive échelle hiérarchique, truffés de fautes d'amateurs, et des générations qui ne savent plus comment écrire une phrase correctement, pour moi c'est celà, le plus alarmant!

[...Moreover, instead of giving lessons to others, we would be better off paying attention to the QUALITY of French in our schools, our businesses. Seeing the emails that circulate sometimes, because of hierarchical scales, riddled with amateurish mistakes, and the generations that no longer know how to write a sentence correctly, for me that's more alarming!]

The same commentator goes on to argue that he would 'rather hear English or Russian' than witness speakers of those languages destroying the French language (*J'aime mieux entendre les gens parler anglais ou russe que les entendre démolir la langue comme ça*). In the *Nouvel Observateur*, several commentators contest the journalist's negative account of Pastagate and argue that more must be done to speak and write French well (e.g. *il faut bien parler et écrire le français* [French must be spoken and written well]).

Twitter findings

The final step in the analysis was to determine how the story was taken up and shared on Twitter. In English, it was found that the *Guardian* was the most retweeted, the *Economist* the second-most retweeted, and *NPR* the third most retweeted article (247, 140, and 99 retweets, respectively). Notably, the Canadian publications are retweeted far less frequently than the international publications: the *Globe and Mail* article was retweeted only 31 times and the *National Post* article only 25 times (see Table 2).

The most frequently used hashtags (see Table 8) reveal that language issues (e.g. #LANGUAGE, #FRENCH, #ITALIAN, #LINGUISTICS) and geography (e.g. #QUEBEC, #CANADA, #MONTREAL) are the most frequent. Another trend is a focus on Quebec politics (e.g. #OQLF, #QCPOLI, #ASSNAT, #BILL101, #CDNPOLI, #POLQC, #BILL14).

Table 7 *Most frequent hashtags in English corpus of retweets*

Hashtag	Frequency
#LANGUAGE	29
#QUEBEC	29
#PASTAGATE	22
#NEWS	16
#CANADA	8
#FRENCH	5
#COOKING	4
#OQLF	4
#PASTA	4
#QCPOLI	4
#ASSNAT	3
#BILL101	3
#CDNPOLI	3
#DMCRSS	3
#ITALIAN	3
#LINGUISTICS	3
#MONTREAL	3
#POLQC	3
#BILL14	2
#BLOGS	2

In addition to hashtags, many readers also expressed reactions to the story on Twitter by posting micro-comments asking questions (e.g. ‘Seriously?’, ‘How ridiculous can one be?’), making exclamations (e.g. ‘That’s embarrassing!’; ‘‘Hilarious!’), using repeated punctuation (e.g. ‘!!!!!!’, ‘?????????????????????????????’), or combining these elements together (e.g. ‘LOL!! :-)’), ‘Laugh or cry?!’).

In French, the most frequently retweeted article is *La Presse*, followed by *Le Devoir* (44 and 21 retweets, respectively). Although these figures are lower than the English retweeting figures, notably, national publications have markedly higher retweeting figures than the international (French) publication (*Nouvel Observateur*, 10 retweets). Unlike the English Tweets, the most frequent hashtags in French tend not to be very revealing because they are not widely-used: only 18% of *La Presse*, 23% of *Le Devoir*, 17% of *Radio Canada*, and 20% of *Nouvel Observateur* retweets use hashtags. When hashtags are used, they mostly refer to Quebec politics (e.g. #ASSNAT, 6, #POLQC, 6, #MAROIS, 2, #QCPAYS, 2) or Quebec language politics more specifically (#OQLF, 8, #LOI101, 2, #OLF, 1). Although the *La Presse* retweets tend not to contain hashtags, they do contain the most freely-worded commentary: 34% of retweets include some freely-worded commentary. Readers’ comments

tend to be negative and express embarrassment (e.g. ‘lucky that ridicule doesn’t kill’; *Une chance que le ridicule ne tue pas!*), argue that the OQLF lacked judgment and wasted public funds (*une absence totale de jugement et un gaspillage de fonds publics*), and comment that the entire affair is ‘ridiculous’ (*Tsé quand c’est ridicule...*).

Conclusions

To summarise the various elements of this study, let us return to the research questions. The first question asked how languages were represented in articles, commentary and retweets. Findings showed that English articles depict English as a humanised, international language that is necessary for business and French as a marginalised, overly-policed language. In French articles, there is little discussion of the English language, and most references to French pertained to the current and proposed changes to language policy in Quebec. English commentators sometimes objected to the interpretations of Quebec’s language situation, but mostly there was a large degree of unanimity in negative representations of the Pastagate affair. While French commentators often expressed embarrassment over the actions of the OQLF, there still seemed to be a consensus that the French language needs to be protected – both from incursions from other languages and from a general linguistic decline from the ‘standard’. In contrast, many English comments indicate a lack of consensus over the issue of French language endangerment.

The second question asked if representations of languages differed according to the country of origin. Findings revealed similarities across English language articles and indeed across English comments and retweets that suggest a uniformity of opinion; more specifically, these texts are largely unanimous in their negative representation of the affair and their focus on the international and business-related contexts. Also, articles published in the United Kingdom obtained the most reader comments and the most retweets. One American publication (*NPR*) also obtained more retweets than its Canadian counterparts. In contrast, while there appeared to be consensus in French Canadian publications, these differed from the publication of France, which thematised issues in keeping with the English articles. Furthermore, there appeared to be less consensus between the journalists and the readers, with the latter expressing embarrassment and negativity. In addition, French Canadian publications did not obtain large numbers of comments or retweets, but the *Nouvel Observateur* obtained even fewer of both. These findings and statistics suggest that the English language may have facilitated the creation of the ‘moral panic’ through the

dissemination of the story to a wider, international audience and the concomitant marginalisation of representations that predominated in French language media.

Finally, the third research question asked if representations of languages differed according to the linguistic medium. As already indicated, the English language data were strongly cohesive in their representations of languages and the Pastagate affair more generally, and while these were somewhat similar to the article published in France, the French Canadian publications differed in that they did not focus on international contexts, business, or negativity. French commentators also expressed more negativity than their journalistic counterparts and they aired concerns about the decline of 'standard' French, which was not an issue in French or English news articles. English articles were widely retweeted and hashtags tended to indicate a focus on language, geography, and Quebec politics; freely-worded commentary tended to be more creative and expressed disbelief and ridicule about the reports. French articles were much less retweeted and contained far fewer hashtags and commentary; nonetheless, there were indications of negativity dominating the 'sharing' of this news story.

Although these findings help demonstrate the language ideologies embedded in this 'moral panic', there are limitations to this study. Only a small number of articles were analysed and it is debatable if all of these publications were 'comparable' in terms of their genres (e.g. news magazine vs. news blog vs. news article) and their access to different channels (e.g. radio, print and online versions) and audiences (e.g. circulation figures). Furthermore, methodologically there were challenges pertaining to the application of corpus and discourse methods to these different data types (articles, comments, tweets) and the meaning of patterns within these different genres (e.g. hashtags, verbatim retweeting); it has not been possible to address these challenges in the present paper. Nevertheless, the findings of this study suggest some of the emerging challenges facing language planners and policymakers in a globalised and increasingly interconnected world. More specifically, this study has indicated that nation states' ability to institute language policies and protect language rights are perhaps being curtailed by an international audience whose understandings of current affairs are driven by English-dominated news and social media. Moreover, this study has argued that the protection of language rights is not simply a matter of linguistic provision; rather, such protection is contingent upon complex, dynamic, and shifting language ideologies in a range of different contexts. While 'discourse planning' (Lo Bianco 2005) could perhaps contribute to the stabilisation of language ideologies such that they could become more conducive to language policymakers' aims and objectives, the rise of user-generated media and Web 2.0

pose important challenges to language planning even in its more traditional form (Wright 2013). All the same, language policies and planning remain important to these media. Without language policies, media can simply become channels for majority and market-driven trends (cf. Kelly-Holmes 2010) – a means of catering to and favouring groups with access to particular communication channels for specific linguistic communities. The ‘barometer’ effect of the media, then, reveals the intensification of pressure exerted on minoritised groups to translate linguistic cultures into English and globalised, market-driven contexts.

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