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## IMPACT OF FRENCH LANGUAGE ON WORLD CIVILIZATION

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**Abstract:** *French, as the language français is referred, is a member of the group Romance, of the family of Indo-European languages. It has also, like most other Romance languages, been derived from Vulgar Latin, of the Roman invaders. Though France was originally occupied by the Gauls, a tribe of Celtic inhabitants, their language did not contribute much to the development of French. In fact, it was the language of the Germanic tribes that had a major effect on the language, and its vocabulary. French was made the official language by King Francois I, in 1539. It gained prominence among the diplomats as well as culture through the West, from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards. European colonization saw French spread to almost the entire world civilization, covering America, Africa, and Asian regions. It had further impact on civilizations worldwide, following the spread of British invasions, as the English language itself has most words derived from French. This paper analyzes the effect of French language on the development of civilized life in different regions of the world, and conclusively outlines the impact made by the French language on the rise and spread of civilization throughout the World.*

### **I. Introduction**

The French language, prevalent on at least four of the seven continents, is a majorly used global language, considering the fact that it is spoken in above 50 nations, having national language or at least official status in about 30 of them. As many people as 300 million speak French world wide, as either their first, or second, language. Apart from neighbour countries like Switzerland, Luxembourg and Belgium, most nations with a French-speaking population are those that were former colonies of France, comprising countries from Africa, parts of India, as well as island nations of the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Some other nations that largely speak French include American nations like Canada and Haiti, and also islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique. French is also common as the second language in Arabic-speaking African nations such as Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia.

French has gained the status of being a language of prime importance in culture, and diplomacy, the world over. It has gained official language status at United Nations (U.N.), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and, undoubtedly, the European Union (EU). It is the most studied of the foreign languages in the world, and stands just second to Spanish in the U.S. French has majorly two dialects, that have then been adapted into numerous regional

varieties. Speakers of the French language are found largely in Africa, with it being used by above 100 million people in more than 30 countries. Roughly 1.5 million speakers use the French language in the island nations of the Indian Ocean including Mauritius, Seychelles and Reunion Islands. However, we must acknowledge the fact that these local varieties differ significantly from normal French language if we consider the attributes like pronunciation, grammar and also vocabulary.

## **II. African Colonies of France – Major impact of French Language**

Governance in Africa, before the advent of Slave Trade and further Colonization, revolved around their community leaders who, either individually or in groups, were better than the usual in most ways. More so, the aim of governance was to ensure collective improvement of the region, community and its people. (Kalu, 2004). However, over a period of time, prevailing circumstances gave way to easy expansion of Christian and Islamic traditions in Africa, as the people had begun to reject their age-old practices and welcomed the thought of change to these new religions, thereby moving the aspects of governance to a more centralized approach.

The Colonial era resulted in the strengthening of the British and French ideological structures, through either direct or indirect rule policies, masking depotism in alternate forms. Of these, the French generally preferred the decentralized, or indirect, form, where they depolyed their authority with the help of local customs and culture.

The change in situation in Europe, specifically Eastern Europe, surely had a corresponding effect on the situation in Africa, especially from the French. Pierre Bourdieu, the great French sociologist has idealized Culture to be a system of timely transferable associations or a collection of organized activities which are indicative of the specific environmental conditions in which they operate, that finally gets transformed into general practices forming a habit (Bourdieu, 1972). Culture, he adds, would develop further based on how effectively members of the society can learn and pass-on that knowledge to their coming generation, through the development of social values, code of conduct, ethics, beliefs and customs.

Development of language was a major component in this modernization and culture enhancement performed by the French in their African colonies. They also invented Tribal entities and started to identify the people by their Chief, Tribe or Clan. Africans had to compulsorily speak French language. The present situation where the youth of Africa witness such a heterogenous culture can surely be attributed to this decree of the colonial rulers, and that too is augmented by the use of media and fast-evolving ICT.

French is still a major official language in Africa, considering the fact that most African nations have remained French colonies for several decades, and their culture, food habits, customs and beliefs, etc. have had a major impact on the lifestyle, culture and, in turn, civilization, of the African nations.

## **III. India and nearby islands**

There has also been immense influence of the French on Indian culture. Although Puducherry, the erstwhile Pondicherry, is largely acknowledged as a standing example of the French influence on India, there are several other indications that prove their importance on Indian cultural development. The maps designed by French cartographers were highly specific and

are still valid. French military was actively engaged with most of the Indian princely states, and this can be seen in the palaces of Kapurthala as well as Chandernagore, while their decorative elements are still visible in the houses at Karaikal, Mahe and Yanam.

As mentioned above, Puducherry is almost analogous to French in India. Most monuments still refresh us with their unmistakable French influence. Some striking features include the Children's Park bearing the Dupleix statue, Municipality (Mairie) building, Library, Cafe, Lady of Angels Church, the Joan of Arc statue, War Memorial and French consulate.

The impact of French language on the life and culture of Puducherry is truly unmistakable. The design of the city centre, which has been made as an oval structure, with streets intersecting at right-angles, as well as the boulevard surrounding the main city are all typically French constructions. Even though Hinduism is a major religion here, the French influence has resulted in a sizable Christian population, as well. There are also a few Muslim inhabitants. Further, street signs are still maintained in both languages, the local language Tamil, as well as in French.

Local restaurants still continue to sell French delicacies on a regular basis. In fact, it can be considered that the marriage of ancient French traditions with the local cuisines have created wonderful, integrated recipes. Most good hotels need their staff to know French language well. Several institutes also teach the French language for the benefit of the common people. Even after more than six decades of their departure from India, apart from the architecture and culture, their influence is seen also in that the local policemen wear the red Kepi', following the French tradition. Most locals who were born in the period of the French rule had opted for citizenship with France, and still maintain close ties, such as sending children for studies, etc. to France.

#### **IV. Impact on Oriental Regions**

In around 1830s, several European governments were worried by the unstable conditions in Pacific regions. The French intervened following the expulsion of two Roman Catholic missionaries from Tahiti, as well as the deportation of two missions from Hawaii. The Roman Catholic missions requested the help of the French navy. They reacted sensibly, made suitable arrangements with Tahiti to be declared as a French protectorate in 1843, followed by French annexation of New Caledonia, in 1853. Another protectorate was declared over Wallis and Futuna, in the year 1887, and they also set up a Naval Commission in New Hebrides, along with the British.

##### Colonial rule - Administration patterns

Colonial rule was a means to assimilate the French customs and traditions in the territories sub-judice. The governor can be considered to be like a Prefect, being assisted by a council made up of French citizens. The colonial governments functioned by implementing these rules, adapting them to the local conditions.

##### Change following World War I

An alteration was experienced in the ruling pattern of the colonial powers in Oceania as a result of the World War I breaking out in 1914. The administrators wanted to help the local people to establish themselves in these trying times of war, in line with the demanding challenges of the modern world. Though this interest towards the Oceanian colonies was

nothing new, it came to be regarded as an international standard. The first step, however, was to set up law and order and the government control mechanisms.

Moreover, in few regions like French Polynesia, the aim was at making people citizens of France. Although funds were restricted, welfare measures were directly coordinated from Paris.

### World War II and its aftermath

The rise of the U.N. following the World War II, saw a major policy change in the administration of the colonial powers. Proposals were made for the development of the regions and self-government was making a start. As a result, local people began to enjoy some representation in the government. France granted independence to Polynesia as well as New Caledonia in 1956; however, the colonies preferred to remain under the control of the French, after 1958.

### Independence Movements

The United Nations (U.N) pressed for self-determination in the colonies, after the World War II. The process began in 1945 in the Pacific territories, but they have still not been fully decolonized. Particularly for the French, their colonies, of Polynesia and New Caledonia, had demanded for more local autonomy, though may not be full independence. The late 1980s saw a crisis rising in Papua New Guinea, and the islands of Bougainville and nearby areas were granted autonomy in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, uprisings haven't been very fierce, as the colonial powers had always given consideration to the interests of the local people, whether it be culture or language.

### V. Conclusion

French, as a language has always held a position of prominence throughout the world. It is largely spoken throughout not just Europe, but the entire world. It is one of the standard European languages, with many medical and scientific terms, being mentioned in French, other than English, for the other countries to also comprehend. The French methods of cooperative administration made them favoured among even their colonial leaders, as a result of which they continued to enjoy their rule over these countries, even though decreed otherwise by the United Nations. As seen above, French is quite an important language which unites the different continents together, owing to its vast presence and global acceptance.

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# ВЛИЯНИЕ НА ФРЕНСКИЯ ЕЗИК ВЪРХУ РАЗВИТИЕТО НА СВЕТОВНАТА ЦИВИЛИЗАЦИЯ

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**Ключови думи:** френски език, Европейска колонизация, Световна цивилизация.

**Резюме:** Френският, като език е част от групата на Романските езици и от семейството на Индо-Европейските езици. Френският, както останалите Романски езици, произхожда от латинския лагер на римските нашественици. Независимо от факта, че Франция е била окупирана от галите (келтско племе), техният език не е допринесъл за нейното развитие. Всъщност, най-голямо значение има езикът на германските племена, който е оставил съществен отпечатък върху развитието на френския език и неговата граматика. Френският език е приет за официален език по време на управлението на крал Францис I през 1539 г. През 17-ти век езикът придобива популярност сред дипломатите и културата на Запада. По време на Европейската колонизация, Френският език се разпростира по цялата световна цивилизация, обхващайки Америка, Африка и Азия. В последствие езикът има влияние и върху развитието на цивилизациите по цял свят, с разширяването на Британското колониално нашествие, тъй като в английския език има много думи, които са взети от френския. Настоящата статия има за цел да анализира ефекта на френския език върху развитието на цивилизацията в различни региона на света и в заключение да очертае влиянието, което френският език има върху възникването и развитието на цивилизацията в световен мащаб.