

The French Language at a Glance: A Socio-Historical Perspective

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ABSTRACT Apart from English, very few international languages can boast of such a rich history and documentation as the French language. It enjoys, more than many other languages, tremendous prestige and internationality. It is arguably at par with English in its status as a major language of business at the United Nations. French literature, on its part, has made an enduring impact on the literary developments of the Western world, being the most subscribed after English. The new status being enjoyed by French was however brought about by the efforts of Ronsard, Du Bellay, etc, in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. From its Latin origins in the early Middle Ages, it grew through various levels of development and standardization before assuming its final standard form in the 18th century. However, in spite of France's promotion and propaganda efforts through its various agencies like the Alliance Française, the TV5 international television channel and the numerous French Cultural Centers all over the globe, many people today do not still seem to appreciate fully its incredible socio-cultural endowment. Moreover, its contributions to world literature and international affairs are quite substantial. Unfortunately, many people still do not see French beyond the surface value of its common sounds and practical, everyday use.