

Expression écrite

France demands that its future leaders must speak English

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France's elite finishing school for future leaders is to make fluency in English an essential entry requirement for the first time. It follows generations of Gallic politicians and academics fighting a "war" against the global supremacy of the language of Shakespeare. Now, the National School of Administration (ENA) in Strasbourg, has conceded that English is an essential tool. A spokesman said all "énarques" – as ENA graduates including President Francois Hollande are called – needed fluent English "in order to cope with their future roles". Another ENA graduate is Jacques Chirac, the former president, who, in 2006, pledged to stop the spread of English across the world, and especially in his own country. "We fight for our language," said Mr Chirac, after leading a walkout from a European Union summit in Brussels after a French business leader spoke in English. "I was profoundly shocked to see a Frenchman express himself in English at the table," said Mr Chirac, as he led a clampdown on words like "weekend", "parking" and "meeting". Mr Chirac's successor, Nicolas Sarkozy, spoke just a few words of English when in office, and had to have a bilingual translator with him whenever he met a so-called "Anglo Saxon". In January 2010, Mr Sarkozy said to the then US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, while standing in the rain, "sorry for the bad time" – a mistranslation of the French 'temps', for weather. Mr Hollande also has very limited English skills, despite visiting the UK as a younger man, and once spending a night in a red telephone box because he had run out of money. Writing to Barack Obama, the US president, to congratulate him on his reelection in 2012, Mr Hollande infamously signed off with the words: "Friendly, François Hollande." This was an embarrassing mistranslation of the French word "amicalement".

Natalie Loiseau, ENA's director, confirmed that the reform of the entrance exam reflected a break with the past. English is the world's third most spoken language, after Mandarin and Spanish, and is widely accepted as the language of business. Ms Loiseau said it was important for students to revise their vocabulary away from French words which are stuffy and outdated. "The usual words such as 'sacrifice', 'vocation' and 'commitment' sound half religious, half military," said Ms Loiseau. Adopting compulsory English is another step in a general reform of ENA, which is regularly accused of being out of touch with a diverse, increasingly globalised modern democracy. It was created by General Charles de Gaulle in 1945 to train civil servants who would rebuild France after the Second World War. But alumni are seen as coming from a narrow and privileged group who end up dominating French public life. Ms Loiseau, a career diplomat, became only the second woman to take charge of ENA when she was appointed in 2012. She said her reforms were essential to ensure that graduates 'know how to ask the right question rather than find the right answer'. Ms Loiseau said the new competitive ENA exam with English included would come into force in 2018, so as to allow potential entrants plenty of time to start learning the language.

Question 1 : According to this article, why does the reform of the entrance exam for ENA reflect “a break with the past”? Answer the question in **your own words** (80 words ±10%).

Question 2 : In your opinion, how important is it to preserve linguistic diversity in the world today? (180 words ±10%).