

Pourquoi faire simple quand on peut faire compliqué?

(Why make it simple when you can make it complicated?)

French is a beautiful language for almost anyone – or at least just for me. If you are interested in this language, you will see that it has some difficulties as well. As the saying goes, rose is beautiful with its thorns.

To remove these thorns, French Academy (Académie Française) proposed a reform which will change spellings. Actually, it was approved in 1990 but it didn't turn out to have enough influence. After 26 years, these new set of spelling rules have been suggested. Maybe it would be wrong to say 'suggested' because these rules are already taught in French educational programs as optional since 2008. The aim is to standardize and simplify the language so as to make it easier to learn, especially for new learners and schoolchildren. These new rules will be effective from the beginning of the next school year in September 2016.

Many teachers and linguists are reluctant to these new rules in France; however, in Switzerland, Belgium and the Canadian province of Quebec, the reform has been accepted and the new rules have started to be taught in schools.¹ The circumflex will be removed from above the letters I and U. It will neither change the pronunciation, nor the meaning of the words. According to French Academy, it will hopefully simplify spellings and remove some anomalies. The circumflex hat (ˆ) on top of certain vowels will be removed. Almost 2,500 words have been affected. You can see some examples in the chart below:

| Old spelling | New spelling |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| coût | cout |
| entraîner, nous entraînons | entraîner, nous entraîons |
| paraître, il paraît | paraitre, il parait |
| aiguë, ambiguë | aigüe, ambigüe |
| ambiguïté | ambigüité |

¹ Retrieved from <http://www.euronews.com/2016/02/04/french-language-revolution-in-france/> on 24 February 2016.

| | |
|----------|---------|
| arguer | argüer |
| nénuphar | nénufar |
| punch | ponch |
| oignon | ognon |
| charriot | chariot |
| asseoir | assoir |

Pierre Favre, president of the National Schools Union, said: “What makes this subject so controversial is that people are passionate about it. To change spelling touches on their childhood, reminds them of the pain, the effort, the successes needed to learn the rules and triumph. The circumflex accents are a kind of trophy”². Some critics have criticized the reforms for changing the language of Molière and Victor Hugo. The reforms have also provoked a #JeSuisCirconflexe campaign on Twitter.

In Turkey, on the other hand, a similar reform was made in 2005. Turkish Language Association (Türk Dil Kurumu) prepared a new spelling book in this year and it was decided that in the words derived from Western languages, circumflex hat at the top of (a) and (o) sounds coming after (l) sound wouldn't be used anymore. But words that are derived from Arabic and Persian languages would continue to have circumflex hat.³ Some examples are given in the chart below:

| Before | After |
|---------------|--------------|
| Lokâl | Lokal |
| Klâvye | Klavye |
| Plâj | Plaj |
| Klârnet | Klarnet |

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² Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/05/not-the-oignon-fury-france-changes-2000-spellings-ditches-circumflex> on 24 February, 2016.

³ Retrieved from <http://arsiv.ntv.com.tr/news/289021.asp> on 2 March, 2016.