

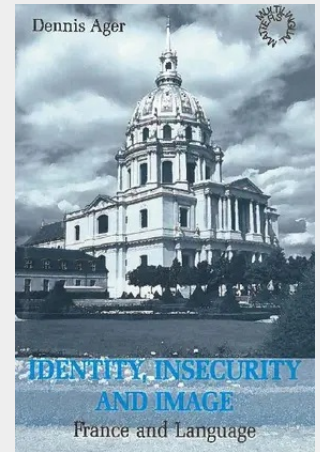
Ager

Identity, Insecurity and Image

France and Language

This book is about the relationship between language and the society that uses it. It specifically aims to discover what drives the French to concentrate so much on language, on what characterises their approach, and on the explanations for the policies governments pursue. It concludes that three motives have been and are important: insecurity, identity and image creation. Insecurity — the fear of a possible break-up of the French state from attacks on it — has coloured policy for the regional languages, the fight against Franglais, and policy, often not openly stated, towards certain social categories — the young, women, immigrants, the poor. The desire to affirm French identity and uniqueness is at the origin of policies to reinforce the status of the French language in the public domain. The zeal of the state in spreading French abroad, and a more recent discovery of the importance of language diversity in the world, can be traced to a mixture of altruism and imperialism: a desire to benefit mankind tempered with an intention to ensure the maintenance of France's world role.

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37,10 €

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Lieferfrist: bis zu 10 Tage

Artikelnummer: 9781853594427

Medium: Buch

ISBN: 978-1-85359-442-7

Verlag: Multilingual Matters

Erscheinungstermin: 08.03.1999

Sprache(n): Englisch

Auflage: Erscheinungsjahr 1999

Produktform: Kartoniert

Gewicht: 346 g

Seiten: 264

Format (B x H): 148 x 210 mm

