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The French Connection:
William Brown Hodgson's Mission in Algiers and the
Dictionnaire de la langue franque

Natalie Operstein

1. Introduction

In the spring of 1824, an ambitious young man applied for a position as clerk-translator with the U.S. State Department. The application was in the form of a letter to the then secretary of state John Quincy Adams and had the support of Congressman Daniel Pope Cook from Illinois and the attorney Francis Scott Key, author of the “Star Spangled Banner”, who had known the applicant since he was a boy. Almost exactly two years later, the young man would sail for Algiers as the State Department's first language officer. His mission was to engage in an intensive study of local languages for the period of three years. A year after his arrival in Algiers, in what for him would be a routine progress report to Adams' secretary of state Henry Clay, he would relate that he now speaks “with tolerable facility” Lingua Franca, the ubiquitous Mediterranean contact vernacular, and that he has “compiled a Vocabulary and Dialogues in Lingua Franca, and Arabic” and intends to “add the corresponding Turkish” (Bryson 1979: 3-32; Hopkins & Hardgreaves 1973: 235; Hardgreaves & Hopkins 1981: 511).

The young man's name was William Brown Hodgson, and his three-and-a-half-year stint in Algiers would end in 1829. His departure would take place on October 9th of that year, while in July of the following year Algiers would be occupied by the French forces. Sometime between those two dates, in preparation for the French military action, a print-shop in Marseille would publish a short practical guide to Lingua Franca to facilitate “les communications des Français avec les habitans du pays sur lequel ils vont combattre”. The guide would be published anonymously (Anonymous 1830a), and its contents, fully disclosed in its long descriptive title *Dictionnaire de la langue franque ou petit mauresque, suivi de quelques dialogues familiers et d'un vocabulaire de mots arabes les plus usuels; à l'usage des Français en Afrique*, would replicate almost exactly those of Hodgson's description of his completed work on Lingua Franca. This guide would provide the first and only detailed description and substantial documentation of Lingua Franca, channeling the course of all subsequent studies on this theoretically important but, up to that point, seriously under-documented language (Schuchardt 1909; Swiggers 1991-1993).

Despite a number of studies devoted to various facets of the *Dictionnaire*, including its sources and clues about its authorship (see, in particular, Cifoletti 1980, 1989, 2004 and Operstein 2017c, 2018b), this publication has remained resolutely anonymous. The present paper strives to fill this gap in our knowledge by presenting and substantiating the hypothesis that the foundation for the *Dictionnaire* was laid by William B. Hodgson's work on Lingua Franca conducted within the parameters of his mission in Algiers as the U.S. State Department's language officer. The timeframe for Hodgson's work on this language, as can be determined from his reports to Clay, was between 12 April 1826, the date of his arrival in Algiers, and 2 May 1827, the date on which the written product of his work on Lingua Franca is described in terms that establish a direct link with the *Dictionnaire*. This paper first provides a brief introduction to Lingua Franca and the *Dictionnaire* (in Section 2) and then contextualizes Hodgson's work on this language within the contours of his mission in Algiers (in Section 3),

closing with a brief summary of the findings (in Section 4). By identifying the origins of the *Dictionnaire*, this study contributes to the scholarship on Lingua Franca and also gives William B. Hodgson long-overdue credit for his uniquely important work on this language. By linking the *Dictionnaire*'s publication with the activities of the American consulate in Algiers shortly before the French invasion of Algeria, it opens unexpected new avenues for historical research on U.S.-France relations. By revealing the connection between Hodgson and the *Dictionnaire*, it also puts some meat on the bones of the hypothesis of Hodgson's biographer "that Hodgson was in the pay of some foreign government" (Bryson 1979: 75).

2. *Dictionnaire de la langue franque*

Lingua Franca is a Romance-based contact vernacular that was used for interethnic communication in various parts of the Mediterranean from sometime in the Middle Ages until the end of the nineteenth century. It has been handed down through a small number of textual samples that range in quantity from a handful of words to single or several sentences and to items of poetry. The quality and authenticity of these materials varies: while some were clearly recorded by experienced users, or at least first-hand observers, others appear to be second-hand, stereotyped imitations manufactured mainly for their comic effect. This textual corpus spans several centuries and geographical regions. The earliest text widely (though not unanimously) believed to be written in Lingua Franca is a poem with the first line "O la Zerbitana retica!" recorded in a manuscript written shortly after 1353 in what its first editor identifies as the "dialetto franco delle isole Gerbe" (Grión 1891: 183) and whose composition he pushes back to 1284-1304 on historical grounds (see also Minervini 1996: 249-252; Lang 2000: 28-29; Cifoletti 2004: 17). The latest textual samples listed in Arends' (1998) annotated bibliography of Lingua Franca are from 1887. A century-by-century breakdown of the other Lingua Franca samples in Arends (1998) gives a fair idea of the temporal distribution of the available documentation: there are two fifteenth-century samples, six sixteenth-century samples, twelve seventeenth-century samples, twelve eighteenth-century samples, and fifteen nineteenth-century samples (see also Foltys 1984-1985; Cifoletti 1989: 155-245, 2004: 195-286; Camus Bergareche 1993: 433-440; Minervini 1996: 249-267; Couto 2002: 37-111).¹

The majority of the textual samples hail from the areas of the former Ottoman regencies of Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli. This fact, together with the numerical preponderance of the samples and descriptions of Lingua Franca from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, have led Cifoletti (2004) to hypothesize that it was only in that region, and during that period, that this contact language was able to become stabilized. In the late 1820s – the period of Hodgson's Algerine mission – the position of Lingua Franca in Algiers and other areas of the Mediterranean was strong. It would continue to be so for decades afterwards, as evidenced by the following account from the middle of the nineteenth century:

¹ Recent studies of written non-native Italian as used in European consular documents from the Maghreb region (Cremona 1996, 2002; Varvaro 2006; Baglioni 2010) have added a new dimension to our inquiry into Lingua Franca, particularly because of the likelihood that the individuals who wrote or copied the documents would have been exposed to and/or used Lingua Franca. The written variety shares with Lingua Franca a number of lexical and structural features, such as the use of *deci sette* and *dieci nove* for *diciassette* 'seventeen' and *diciannove* 'nineteen', respectively (Baglioni 2010: 268; see also Operstein 2017c: 29-32). A thorough assessment of whether, or how, the two linguistic varieties are related still remains to be undertaken.

Quant à la superficie géographique dans laquelle on parle cette langue *omnibus*, elle est au moins égale à celle des langues modernes les plus usitées, car elle est véritablement la langue de tout le bassin de Méditerranée. On la parle à Constantinople comme à Gibraltar; à Marseille comme à Alger, à Tunis, à Tripoli, à Alexandrie; dans les villes de l'Adriatique et de la Mer Noire comme dans les Echelles du Levant. Elle n'est point limitée au littoral, comme on le croit généralement; elle s'étend au loin dans l'intérieur des terres. Au Sud de l'Algérie, on la parle dans les oasis du Ziban, des Beni-Mزاب et même de Touat. (Anonymous 1852;² cited in Cifoletti 1989: 194)

A source from the last quarter of the nineteenth century reports its presence as still ubiquitous, though less vigorous than before:

In these days it [Lingua Franca] is not employed to the same extent as formerly, but it is still a recognised medium of communication on all the Mahometan shores of the Mediterranean. (Clough 1876: 12)

The demise of Lingua Franca is officially recorded in the letter of 13 November 1909 from Marcel Cohen to Hugo Schuchardt sent in connection with the publication of Schuchardt's seminal article on Lingua Franca.³ Cohen, who had conducted fieldwork in Algeria in 1908-1909, wrote to Schuchardt:

Comme vous l'avez très bien vu, la Langue franque peut être considérée comme morte; il n'existe plus de langue *neutre* parlée au cours de relations entre des gens qui ont respectivement d'autres langues maternelles (arabe et français s'entretenant en sabir à base d'espagnol ou d'italien – tel qu'on le voit dans la relation d'Haedo ou dans des oeuvres écrites aux environs de 1830-1840, comme les mémoires de Léon Roche). (Cited in Swiggers 1993: 273)⁴

In light of its temporal depth and spatial breadth, the existing documentation of Lingua Franca is wholly inadequate; if viewed as parts of a whole, the disparate samples defy a coherent structural interpretation (Cifoletti 2004: 19). The publication of the *Dictionnaire* has brought about a profound and permanent change in this bleak documentary landscape. The *Dictionnaire* far outstrips all the other available sources in terms of size, coherence, and descriptive precision; inevitably, it ended up shaping our entire vision of Lingua Franca, providing the basis for all descriptive studies and theoretical proposals concerning this language (e.g., Schuchardt 1909; Whinnom 1965; Coates 1971; Birmingham 1976; Collier 1977; Cifoletti 1980 et seq.; Foltys 1987; Brann 1994; Russo 2001; Velupillai 2015; Operstein 2017a et seq.).

Structurally, the *Dictionnaire* consists of a preface and three substantive sections spread over 107 pages. The preface occupies the first six pages, which are unnumbered; it introduces Lingua Franca, provides a brief outline of its structure, and lays out the *Dictionnaire*'s purpose. The first substantive section is titled *Dictionnaire de la langue franque, ou petit mauresque* and is the longest in terms of its size. This is a vocabulary of Lingua Franca, with French as the entry and

² Schuchardt (1909: 457), without explanation, attributes this anonymous piece to [Oscar] MacCarthy and [Auguste] Varnier.

³ Schuchardt's article is available in English (Schuchardt 1979) and Italian (Venier 2012) translations; the latter work also includes an extensive commentary and study.

⁴ Cf. also in Cifoletti (2004: 284): "La constatazione definitiva del decesso della lingua franca venne dal grande semitista Marcel Cohen in una lettera a Schuchardt, datata 13.11.1909 . . .".

Lingua Franca as the exit language; it occupies pages [11] through 92. The second substantive section is titled *Dialogues*. It occupies pages 93 through 98 and contains eight learner's dialogues in French juxtaposed with their translations in Lingua Franca. The third and last substantive section contains a vocabulary of Maghrebi Arabic, with French as the entry and Arabic as the exit language; this section occupies pages 99 through 107. Both the Lingua Franca and the Arabic are written in a substantially French-based practical orthography (see Figures 1 and 2).

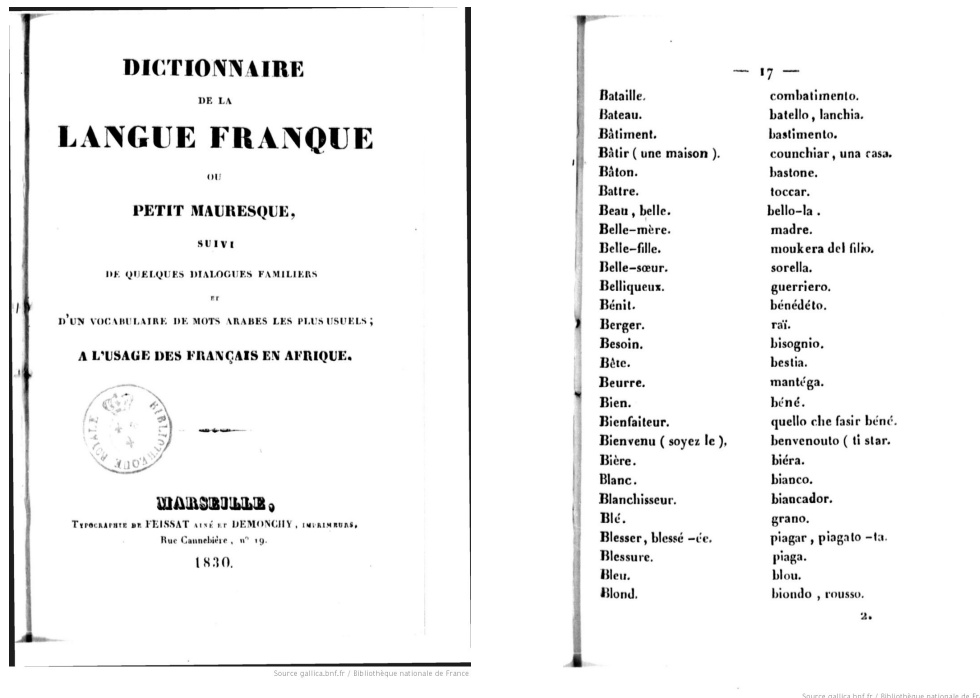
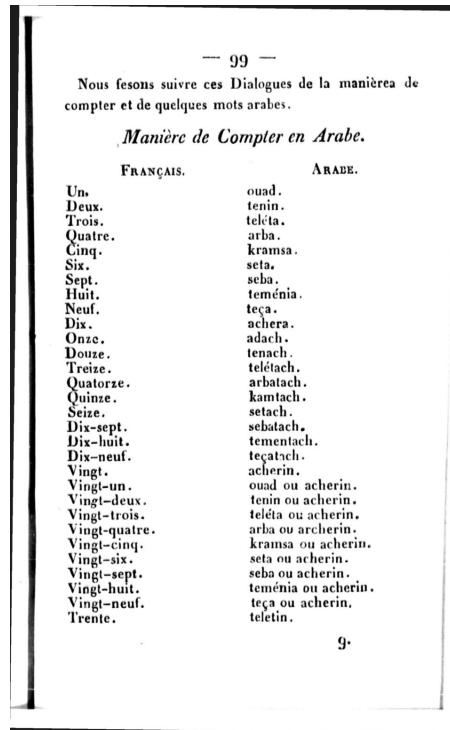


Figure 1. The title page of Anonymous (1830a) and a sample page of the Lingua Franca vocabulary (source: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/>)



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 2. The first pages of the dialogues and Arabic vocabulary (source: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/>)

The intriguing issue of the *Dictionnaire*'s authorship has been addressed by Guido Cifoletti, who has made a number of interesting observations in this regard. Based on a number of clues, Cifoletti reaches the following overall conclusion:

[T]utto sommato è più facile pensare che il *Dictionnaire* sia opera di marsigliesi, forse non espertissimi di francese letterario, che però potevano aver avuto dei contatti con italiani e aver acquisito qualche nozione della nostra lingua. (Cifoletti 1989: 88-89)

The above and related inferences about the *Dictionnaire*'s probable authorship are based on the clues provided by its orthography for Lingua Franca as well as the latter's phonology and lexicon. Cifoletti's inference about the compilers' non-native knowledge of Italian stems from vacillation in the use of geminates and affricates in Lingua Franca words of Italian origin. Their familiarity with Provençal can be inferred from the fact that the *Dictionnaire* is practically the only known source to record words of Provençal origin in Lingua Franca. The inference about the compilers' limited knowledge of Spanish follows from the absence of Spanish orthographic conventions in the transliteration of Lingua Franca and the comparatively small number of the recorded Hispanisms, whose phonological shape additionally betrays their probable acquisition via Arabic. The inference about the compilers' (or their informants') limited knowledge of Arabic is supported by the small number of the recorded Arabisms, their phonological adaptation (e.g., the loss of pharyngeals) and the absence of any discernible phonological influence of Arabic on Lingua Franca outside the Spanish-derived portion of its lexicon (Cifoletti 1980: 17, 1989: 88-89, 1991, 2004: 83-86).

In my investigation of some of the sources used in the making of the *Dictionnaire* (Operstein 2018b), I have determined that the *Dictionnaire*'s dialogues in Lingua Franca are modeled after the language-learning dialogues in Vergani (1823), a popular contemporary textbook for learning Italian. The *Dictionnaire*'s Arabic vocabulary was compiled by using the list of commonly used words in another French textbook for learning Italian, Veneroni (1800), first published in the seventeenth century but still widely known in the nineteenth. I also find evidence of these textbooks' impact in the *Dictionnaire*'s practical orthography and its structural description of Lingua Franca (Operstein 2018b).

It should be mentioned that the *Dictionnaire* has drawn criticism from some commentators for its appearance of hasty composition. This perception stems from typographical errors in the French and Lingua Franca, less than consistent use of the practical orthography, and a certain unevenness of the Lingua Franca vocabulary. With regard to this last issue, Cifoletti points out that the initial letters of the alphabet contain relatively few entries whereas the final letters, particularly the <s>, are disproportionately large; this increase in the number of entries is accompanied by “un incremento vertiginoso dei francesismi . . . scarsamente credibili” (1989: 88). These inconsistencies make the *Dictionnaire* uneven from the viewpoint of its reliability: Cifoletti, for instance, views as its most reliable portions the dialogues as well as the phrases and periphrases in the Lingua Franca vocabulary (1989: 88). In an attempt to resolve these inconsistencies, I have suggested either that the author was forced to bring the *Dictionnaire* to publication prematurely, or that the *Dictionnaire* was published by someone other than its original author (Operstein 2018b). This latter hypothesis now appears more likely, and will be taken up in the next section.

3. William Brown Hodgson

William Brown Hodgson held many honors and distinctions in his life. He was the State Department's first language officer. His secret mission to Egypt in 1834 would serve “as a model for later American diplomatic missions to the Middle East” (Bryson 1979: 97). During his lifetime, “Hodgson associated with presidents, secretaries of state, congressmen, senators, justices of the Supreme Court, not to mention the wide range of dignitaries whom he met in Algiers, Turkey, Egypt, Tunis, and Tangier” (Bryson 1979: 191). “He was one of the very first Americans to receive the Legion of Honor from France” (Mackall 1931: 328). “[I]n his day . . . he enjoyed a really international reputation in the field of his special studies” (Mackall 1931: 324). Hodgson held honorary degrees from Princeton and was a member of the American Philosophical Society, American Oriental Society, Royal Asiatic Society, Asiatic Society of Paris, Ethnological Societies of Paris, London and New York, and Geographical Societies of Paris and London (Mackall 1931: 327-328). Yet, despite his distinguished trajectory and significant diplomatic and scholarly achievements, little has been written about Hodgson's life and work.

The only full-fledged biography of Hodgson was written by Bryson (1979), based mainly on archival materials located in the United States and in part on Hodgson's own publications. Brief sketches of Hodgson's life and of various facets of his work are presented in Mackall (1931), Ives (1937), Finnie (1967), Field (1969), Brower (2009) and Kennedy (2015). The substance of Hodgson's correspondence with Henry Clay, John Quincy Adams' secretary of state, during Hodgson's stay in Algiers is summarized in Hopkins & Hardgreaves (1973), Hardgreaves & Hopkins (1981) and Seager (1982). Some relevant information is also found in John Quincy

Adams' diaries (Adams 1875, 1876). The present outline of Hodgson's mission in Algiers, the central object of this study, weaves together the threads scattered throughout all these publications.

Hodgson's mission as the U.S. State Department's first language officer was due to growing commercial traffic between the United States and the Mediterranean, which created the need for trained personnel to "converse or correspond with the peoples along the coast of North Africa" (Bryson 1979: 11). The opportunities that Algiers provided for such training were clearly discerned by William Shaler, the consul general in Algiers since 1815. Shortly after his arrival there Shaler "recommended that a young man be sent to the Consulate General at Algiers to study the Arabic and Turkish languages" (Ives 1937: 333). Ten years would elapse before Shaler's recommendation would be acted upon, however, and several circumstances would converge to make Hodgson the first young man to be selected. Chief among these were Hodgson's gift for language study, his skill in securing political patronage, and John Quincy Adams' ascendance to presidency, which permitted him to realize his plans to professionalize the consular and diplomatic service by, among other things, "the development, within the structure of the federal government, of a fund of competence in exotic tongues" (Field 1969: 193).

William Brown Hodgson was born on 1 September 1801 in Georgetown, D.C., into what appears to be a middle class family. He attended the classical academy, where he studied classical Greek and Latin and also assisted the Reverend James Carnahan, his mentor and future president of Princeton. In 1824, Princeton conferred on Hodgson the honorary degree of Master of Arts, of which he was informed by a letter from Carnahan dated 15 April 1824 stating "that in consideration of your attainments in sciences and literature the honorary degree of Master of Arts was conferred on you by an unanimous vote of the Trustees of the College of New Jersey at a meeting held at Princeton on the 14th instant" (cited in Ives 1937: 333; see Bryson 1979: 6-8). On 29 April 1824, in a letter to the then secretary of state John Quincy Adams, Hodgson applied for a position as clerk-translator with the State Department. In May 1824 he was offered, and declined, the Professorship of Languages and Mathematics at Asbury College in Baltimore, Maryland. His letter to the Reverend John Emory, President of Asbury College, indicates that his employment with the State Department had already commenced. Hodgson's letter contains useful information about the languages he commanded at the time:

An annual appropriation is made for the Translation of Languages, in the Dept. of State. The papers to be translated, are chiefly, the correspondences of Diplomatic Agents, in their respective languages. The intercourse of this Govt. must be extended under succeeding administrations, which will embrace, Modern Greece, Turkey and perhaps some other Eastern Nations. These negotiations will require a Knowledge of the Oriental Living languages, to which I shall immediately devote myself for their acquisition. At present, there are not more than \$500 appropriated for the French and Spanish. I incline to believe, that the Govt. will in the event, as suggested above, make an ample provision for a Translator, of the requisite qualifications. I translate at present 4 Modern Languages and have a foundation (in Hebrew) for the Arabic, Persian, etc. At my age, and with my laborious Habits, how vastly important it would be for me, to commence a regular course of Study, for the acquisition of languages. What might not 5 years of steady applications effect? . . . At present I am employed in Translating Portuguese & Spanish but do not know how long I may be wanted.⁵ (Cited in Ives 1937: 333)

⁵ Apart from Spanish and Portuguese, Hodgson knew French (Bryson 1979: 8). It is unclear what the fourth modern language mentioned in the letter is.

Hodgson's desire to advance his career in the government through dedicated study of "oriental"⁶ languages got a chance to be realized after John Quincy Adams became president and determined to develop personnel proficient in these languages "in order to facilitate diplomatic negotiations in the Mediterranean and the Middle East" (Bryson 1979: 8). In a letter of 29 December 1825, Adams' secretary of state Henry Clay advised William Shaler about Adams' intention to send Hodgson to Algiers to serve under Shaler as a language student. Hodgson was advised of his posting to Algiers via a letter from Clay dated 14 January 1826 (Bryson 1979: 12). His language training was to last for three years and he was to receive a salary of \$600 a year, a sum Shaler found "quite equal to what the case requires" (cited in Ives 1937: 333). Clay also instructed Hodgson "to report, 'from time to time', on the progress made in his studies and to add 'such observations and remarks' as he supposes 'will be either useful or interesting'" (Hardgreaves & Hopkins 1981: 37).⁷ On 19 January 1826 the grateful Hodgson paid a visit to Adams, who recorded the meeting in his diary. This entry is worth quoting in full as it sheds light on Adams' purpose in sending Hodgson to Algiers and specifically names Lingua Franca as one of the languages he was being sent there to study:

Hodgson came to say he was preparing to embark for Algiers, and to thank me for the opportunity of going there. My purpose is to attach to each of the Consulates in Barbary a young man for three years, to learn the Turkish and Arabic languages, and the lingua Franca, with a view to have persons among our public officers versed in those languages. I have desired that Hodgson might be one of those persons, as he has a fondness and a facility for acquiring languages quite uncommon. The other three students of this class I propose to select among the midshipmen of the squadron in the Mediterranean. (Adams 1875: 106-107)

When Hodgson's departure for Algiers was unexpectedly delayed, he employed the time "to study Italian and German and to acquire a collection of books on language" (Bryson 1979: 12). He sailed from Baltimore on 11 February 1826, and reported his arrival in Algiers in a letter to Clay dated 12 April 1826. His passage overseas took him through Virginia, Gibraltar and Minorca (Hardgreaves & Hopkins 1981: 235; Bryson 1979: 12-13).

⁶ The Western conception of "the Orient" is explained by Oren (2007: 12): "Prior to the twentieth century, at least, 'the Orient' comprised a vast area stretching from Anatolia and Western Thrace to North Africa and Egypt, and from Arabia to the Persian Gulf. . . . These lands were linked in the American mind by a common civilization, by similarities of dress, architecture and art, religious beliefs, and modalities of government".

⁷ Hopkins & Hardgreaves (1973), Hardgreaves & Hopkins (1981) and Seager (1982) summarize Hodgson's letters with selected direct quotations. Here and below, these editors' summaries are enclosed in double quotation marks; the direct quotations, if included by the editors into their summaries, are given in single quotation marks.



Figure 3. A miniature portrait of Hodgson (1842)
(source: <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/william-brown-hodgson-1801-1871>)

At the time of Hodgson's arrival, the population of the regency of Algiers is described by Anonymous (1830b: 32-38) as consisting of Turks ("l'aristocratie du pays"), Kuloghlus (descendants of Turkish men and local women), Moors,⁸ Berbers,⁸ Jews, Arabic nomads, sub-Saharan slaves, and small numbers of renegades and foreign agents with their families and servants. Shaler (1826: 47) estimates the population of the city of Algiers at fifty thousand; for the year 1823, Anonymous (1830b: 66) provides the figure of forty thousand inhabitants, of whom 4,000 were Turks, 10,000 Kuloghlus, 20,000 Moors and 6,000 Jews.

Shaler's correspondence in the wake of Hodgson's arrival indicates that he was well pleased with the young man, and Hodgson's letters show that the feeling was mutual (Bryson 1979: 14). In his dispatch to Clay dated 1 June 1826, about a month and a half after Hodgson's arrival, Shaler writes:

I am very much pleased to find that the government have at length determined to avail themselves of the great advantages offered by the Barbary Consulates for the instructions of young men, which must result in important benefits to the public service. Mr. Hodgson appears to possess all the qualifications necessary to avail himself of these advantages, and if I have not erred in my judgment of him, he will not disappoint the expectations of the President. The salary which has been assigned to him, is quite equal to what the case requires, and I have denominated him Secretary to the Consulate. I have already sent to my bookseller in Paris for the elementary books necessary to the study of the Arabic and Turkish languages, and in the meantime, I have borrowed from friends, such as are sufficient to begin with. (Cited in Ives 1937: 333, 360)

⁸ Anonymous (1830b: 33, 36) supplies the following definitions for these population groups: "De Maures. Ils descendent d'un mélange d'anciens Mauritanien et Numides avec les Phéniciens, les Romains et les Arabes. . . . Les Maures forment le fonds de la population des villes et des plaines cultivées" and "De Berbers. La race des Berbers, entièrement distincte des Arabes et des Maures, paraît indigène de l'Afrique septentrionale. Ceux qui habitent les montagnes d'Alger, sont connus sous le nom de *Cabaïles*".

In his subsequent correspondence concerning Hodgson, Shaler would comment on the young man's excellent classical education, "uncommon genius for philological pursuits" and rapid progress in the study of Arabic, Turkish and Persian, predicting that Hodgson "may become a very useful man and may probably rank amongst the first philologists of his time"; Shaler also would describe Hodgson as "an excellent scholar of industrious habits and reputable talents" (cited in Ives 1937: 360; Bryson 1979: 15-17, 19). Shaler's assessment would later be echoed by Peter S. Duponceau (see below): "I have satisfied myself that he is a young man of extraordinary genius, of great industry, and of sound judgement, and that he will be an honor to his country" (cited in Bryson 1979: 24).

Shaler's letter of 1 June 1826 contains the first indication of the difficulty that was to hinder the progress of Hodgson's language studies in Algiers, at least initially: the lack of proper learning materials. During the first year, this subject would recur in Hodgson's reports to Clay with monotonous regularity. In his first report, dated 1 June 1826, he notes that the consul general "has furnished him with some books until he 'can be better supplied from Paris'" (Hopkins & Hardgreaves 1973: 411). In the report of 1 December 1826, he again remarks on "the slow progress of his language studies because of lack of books" and notes that "he plans to resort 'to Paris, and the school of Oriental languages in that University'" (Hopkins & Hardgreaves: 971; Bryson 1979: 16).⁹ In the report of 20 January 1827, Hodgson expresses "continuing hope that he will receive 'the books necessary to prosecute . . . Oriental Studies; and notwithstanding present difficulties, . . . accomplish the object of . . . [his] mission in the course of this year'" (Hardgreaves & Hopkins 1981: 101). In the report of 2 May 1827, he observes "that the 'difficulties' mentioned in his 'letter of January 25th [i.e., 20th]' remain, although he expects to receive his 'Oriental books . . . in a few weeks'" (Hardgreaves & Hopkins 1981: 511).

Hodgson's initial report of 1 June 1826 also informed Clay that he had "applied himself to the Lingua Franca" (Bryson 1979: 16). Adams' inclusion of Lingua Franca within the contours of Hodgson's mission was significant as the language was not considered worthy of serious study. This dismissive attitude is clearly articulated in Shaler's letter to Clay of 1 June 1826:

As to the Lingua Franca it cannot properly be termed a language; it is a barbarous jargon compounded of Spanish, French and Italian, and is naturally understood by all who are acquainted with its elements. It is not used in any serious business, and is spoken with any fluency only by the lowest vulgar. (Cited in Ives 1937: 360)

The same attitude is apparent in Shaler's book *Sketches of Algiers*, which came out the same year. The relevant passage is useful in enumerating the languages spoken in Algiers:

The languages spoken in Algiers are the Turkish, the Arabic, the Hebrew, and what Doctor Shaw calls the Showiah, or that which is spoken by the independent mountaineers, which there is strong reason for believing an ancient and original language. The Turkish is the language of the government, though the Arabic is the predominant tongue; French is in general use in the society of the foreign agents residing here, and the *Lingua Franca* [*sic*], which is a barbarous compound of Spanish, French, Italian, and Arabic, is the ordinary medium of communication between foreigners and natives. (Shaler 1826: 13)

⁹ To Hodgson's acute disappointment, "the President had disapproved his request for a leave of absence and had expressed a wish that he remain at his post" (Hardgreaves & Hopkins 1981: 101). The denial to visit Paris was related to Shaler's departure, on 20 April 1827, for a lengthy leave of absence to improve his health and Hodgson's appointment as chargé d'affaires during Shaler's absence (Bryson 1979: 16).

It should be noted that, even though in his letter Shaler wrote that Lingua Franca “is not used in any serious business”, the following fragment from his own book suggests that the reality was somewhat different (and comparable evidence is presented by Dakhliia 2008):

In April, 1812, a letter from the Prince Regent of England to the Dey of Algiers was brought by the Drogoman of the latter to the late Colonel Lear, then Consul General of the United States in Barbary, on the pretext of obtaining a correct translation of it into the *lingua Franca* . . . (Shaler 1826: 118)

Fortunately, Hodgson was serious about his assignment, which specifically included the study of Lingua Franca. It is clear from his reports to Clay that he focused on this language during his first year in Algiers. This may have been prompted by the language’s novelty and the challenge of acquiring it without learning tools, and it was facilitated by Hodgson’s knowledge of the Romance languages which formed its basis. An additional factor may have been the lack of learning tools for Arabic and Turkish, the more “serious” languages in Hodgson’s assignment, and the need to spend lengthy periods waiting for pertinent academic materials to arrive from Paris. Hodgson’s work on Lingua Franca is circumscribed by his report of 1 June 1826 to Clay informing the latter that he had “applied himself to the Lingua Franca” and his report of 2 May 1827 stating “that he has ‘compiled a Vocabulary and Dialogues in Lingua Franca, and Arabic’ and that he intends ‘to add the corresponding Turkish’” (Hardgreaves & Hopkins 1981: 511). The information that Hodgson’s preparation of the Arabic vocabulary preceded his planned work on a Turkish one squares with his initial plan, outlined in his letter of 1 June 1826 to Clay, to defer “his study of Turkish until he had attained a grasp of Arabic, because study of the former presupposed a knowledge of the latter” (Bryson 1979: 16). The letter of 2 May 1827 also informs us that Hodgson has acquired active rather than merely structural knowledge of Lingua Franca:

I speak the Lingua Franca with tolerable facility, from my knowledge of the Romanic languages of which it is compounded. It is a useful medium of intercourse in these countries, being used from Constantinople to Morocco. (Cited in Bryson 1979: 17)

Hodgson’s focus on Lingua Franca early on in his stay may also be seen as related to his study of Italian, begun in Baltimore while he was waiting for his passage overseas. Given that both Shaler and Hodgson had to procure books from Paris, it is likely that Hodgson’s study of Italian proceeded with the help of a French textbook, such as Veneroni (1800) or Vergani (1823).¹⁰ Relying on an intermediary language was not unusual in Hodgson’s practice of language study; thus, in 1827 he reported on translating a U.S.-Algerian treaty from Turkish into English with the help of an Arabic-Turkish-Persian lexicon, and he would later rely on Arabic to study Berber. In 1832, in a letter to the Department of State, he would express an opinion that successful study of Turkish requires prior knowledge of Greek, Latin, French and Italian and is best carried out simultaneously with the study of Arabic and Persian (Bryson 1979: 63, 75). In addition, as we know from Shaler’s testimony, French was the usual language of communication among the resident foreign agents. Hodgson’s ambitious project to create the first ever learning

¹⁰ French textbooks may also have been regarded as superior to textbooks in English. Shaler’s letter to his friend Senator Johnston of Louisiana indicates as much: “As I provided myself with elementary books in France I had occasion to remark the excellency of their methods for studying the classical languages. They appear to me superior to ours in simplicity of arrangement and perspicuity of demonstration. My Greek grammar was composed in 1813 by an illustrious professor for the use of the celebrated normal school in France . . .; it has gone through the 13th edition and is the best synopsis of any language that I have ever seen” (cited in Nichols 1950: 136).

tool for Lingua Franca may thus be seen as a natural extension of his nearly contemporaneous study of Italian, and perhaps also as a reaction to the lack of learning tools of any kind for this language. His reliance on Vergani (1823) and Veneroni (1800) as his models (Operstein 2018b) naturally flows from these assumptions.

According to the published summaries of Hodgson's reports to Clay, the report of 2 May 1827 is the last to contain a reference to Lingua Franca. This, coupled with the fact that the *Dictionnaire* contains no anticipated addition in Turkish, serves as an indication that after May 1827 Hodgson's attention had switched to other matters and other languages, which included Arabic, Turkish, Persian, Modern Greek and Berber (Seager 1982: 221). Hodgson's studies during the later part of his stay in Algiers were facilitated by an "extensive Oriental library" which he was able to amass by ordering books from Paris (Bryson 1979: 24).

Hodgson's interest in the then little-known Berber language grew out of a suggestion from Shaler and was nurtured by Hodgson's correspondence with Peter S. Duponceau, an officer of the American Philosophical Society (Nichols 1950: 136). Between May 1828 and October 1829 he sent Duponceau a series of letters on Berbers and the Berber language; several of these were published in Transactions of the American Philosophical Society and the North American Review (Bryson 1979: 19). His other research during his stay in Algiers included interviews with native migrants, merchants and slaves which produced a wealth of information on various northern and central African peoples, including their languages, customs, geography, environment, agriculture, trade, political alliances and military capabilities. Some of Hodgson's letters related to these investigations would be published by and/or presented to the American Philosophical Society, resulting in his election as a corresponding member of the Royal Asiatic Society of London, as a member of the American Philosophical Society and, later, of other learned societies (Mackall 1931: 327-328, 344; Bryson 1979: 21-24; Browser 2009: 59-60).

Hodgson's departure from Algiers took place on 9 October 1829. He sailed for Barcelona, from there to travel to Paris, and in late November he proceeded to Le Havre, departing for New York City on 1 December 1829 (Bryson 1979: 31).

The results of Hodgson's language-training stint in Algiers are summarized by John Quincy Adams in his diary entry of 16 January 1830. The entry shows that Adams is aware of Hodgson's pioneering research on Berber, and names Lingua Franca as one of the languages the young man has acquired:

Mr. Hodgson called upon me this morning, a young man whom in the summer of the year 1825 I sent to Algiers, there to learn the Oriental languages. He had an extraordinary facility at learning languages, and had already made some progress in the Hebrew, Arabic, and Persian; and we were in this country so destitute of persons versed in the Oriental languages that we could not even procure a translation of any paper which occasionally came to us in Arabic. He has been absent about four years, and has acquired the Arabic, Turkish, the Lingua Franca, and the Berber, a language concerning which he has made very interesting discoveries. (Adams 1876: 170)

Adams' diary entry also mentions another activity that Hodgson was engaged in during his stay in Algiers, namely collecting books and manuscripts in "oriental" languages:

He [Hodgson] said he had brought home some valuable books and manuscripts relating to the Oriental languages, which had cost him about fifteen hundred dollars, which he had hoped would be taken by the Department of State, but he might now find it difficult to dispose of them. (Adams 1876: 171)

The extent of Hodgson's collection, which was apparently purchased with his own funds, is mentioned in his letter to Duponceau of 4 September 1829: "I have collected 250 manuscripts in Arabic, Turkish, Persian, and Berber" (cited in Bryson 1979: 24).

In summary, Hodgson's activities in Algiers relevant to his language training may be roughly divided into three areas. The first is his study of the languages that the State Department needed for the serious business of diplomatic and commercial translation and interpreting, primarily Arabic and Turkish, but also Persian and Modern Greek. Given that Hodgson's continued employment with the government depended on his proficiency in these languages, acquiring them, and perfecting his competency in them, were uppermost on his list of priorities.

The second area was Hodgson's pioneering fieldwork research on the Berber language, Berbers, and other African peoples and languages. This work was undertaken, at least in part, with a view to furthering Hodgson's career aspirations by establishing his reputation as a scholar. It bore fruit in the form of recognition of his scholarly abilities, dissemination of his work, and his election as a member of prestigious scholarly societies.

While the first and the second type of activities were forms of time-consuming investment into Hodgson's professional future, activities in the third area aimed at supplementing his intermittent and apparently insufficient income and compensating him for the uncertainty of his prospects of continued employment with the government. As Bryson (1979: 40) puts it, "[Hodgson] was not above making a profit on his work". One of the activities that fall under this category is his acquisition of Maghrebi manuscripts with a view to selling them: after an unsuccessful attempt to sell his valuable collection to the U.S. government, Hodgson would sell it to the British Museum (Bryson 1979: 39, 171 n. 56). Another activity from which Hodgson derived some profit was his work on Berber. Under his direction, his Berber consultant translated into Berber parts of the Bible; in 1831, Hodgson would sell the translation to the British and Foreign Bible Society in London (Bryson 1979: 23).

Hodgson's work on *Lingua Franca* straddled all three of the above categories. It involved acquiring active proficiency in the language, which necessarily included a research component since the only way such proficiency could be attained was through a fieldwork study. In addition, sometime prior to his departure, Hodgson apparently sold or donated to the French his manuscript containing the "Vocabulary and Dialogues in *Lingua Franca*, and Arabic".

There may have been a number of reasons for his decision to part with this work. By the end of his three-and-a-half-year stint in Algiers, Hodgson had progressed immeasurably in his study of Arabic and Turkish, the languages that were essential for his future career prospects, as he envisioned them, and had also established himself as a respectable scholar. His work on Berber commanded respect from serious scholars and got him elected to a learned society; by contrast, his research on *Lingua Franca*, which was widely regarded as a "barbarous jargon", would not have added appreciably to his scholarly reputation (and may even have detracted from it). Hodgson's progress in Arabic, Turkish and Persian was highly praised in Shaler's letters; in contrast, his command of *Lingua Franca* was self-reported and does not appear to be mentioned in Shaler's correspondence. Under these circumstances, and taking into account Hodgson's meager earnings, coupled with his manuscript-hunting activities and uncertain job prospects, it is likely that if there was a demand for a manuscript for which he saw no useful purpose, he would have welcomed an opportunity to sell it.

That such a demand existed is clear from the contemporary political situation and the events to follow on the heels of Hodgson's departure. For the better part of Hodgson's stay, Algiers had been at war with France and, due to Shaler's leave of absence, it became Hodgson's job to report

home on the “State of Hostilities . . . between this Regency and France” (Hardgreaves & Hopkins 1981: 723; Bryson 1979: 25-26). Preparatory work for the French military move against Algeria was thus underway during the period that substantially coincided with Hodgson’s stay in Algiers, and he was exceedingly well-positioned to observe and participate in it.

Hodgson was also apparently well acquainted with other foreign agents residing in Algiers. Owing to the official and temporary nature of his stay there, it is likely that his only opportunity to socialize was with other foreign agents and their families. At least, this is the picture we get from Shaler’s observations after his own ten-year residence in Algiers:

The foreign agents residing in Algiers have no intercourse except officially, with the Turks or natives, their society is consequently confined to their own circle; but as the representatives of foreign states here are generally men of respectable talents and character, enjoying the confidence of their respective governments, the union of their families forms one of the most friendly and pleasing societies that I have ever met with; indeed, in this respect, leaving nothing to desire. . . . [S]hould I ever be called away from Algiers, I should not cease to regret being deprived of the kind hospitality and friendly fascinations of its interesting society. (Shaler 1826: 82-83)

In the estimate of Anonymous (1830b: 38), this contingent amounted to no more than sixty individuals, including servants: “Les familles de Consuls sont les seules familles chrétiennes qui habitent Alger; elles ne s’élèvent pas, maîtres et domestiques, à soixante individus”. Hodgson’s initial introductions to this milieu were made by Shaler, and it was from his colleagues that he was to learn about the region’s political situation (Bryson 1979: 14). His language-training activities also often depended on borrowing materials from other foreign agents. For example, upon Hodgson’s arrival Shaler jump-started his language studies by borrowing books from friends: “I have already sent to my bookseller in Paris for the elementary books necessary to the study of the Arabic and Turkish languages, and in the meantime, I have borrowed from friends, such as are sufficient to begin with” (cited in Ives 1837: 333, 360). In 1827, Hodgson translated the U.S.-Algerian treaty of 1816 from Turkish to English with the help of a dictionary borrowed from the Sardinian consul general (Bryson 1979: 17). In summary, the combination of Hodgson’s administrative duties, social life and language-training activities provided him with ample opportunities for networking in the diplomatic milieu, while his duty to report on political and commercial developments in the region, coupled with his research on the local peoples and languages, would have caused him to accumulate a mass of factual information on Algeria that would have been of great value to the French war effort.

During Hodgson’s subsequent stint as a dragoman in Constantinople he would be described as a spy, “leading us to believe”, observes his biographer, “that Hodgson was in the pay of some foreign government” (Bryson 1979: 75). That this hypothesis is not without a foundation is suggested by the recognition that he would receive from the French government:

On 15 November of that year [1855] the French government conferred on him La Medaille des Recompenses in recognition of his services rendered to French colonial officials in Algiers. (Apparently Hodgson had made available to these agents of French imperialism his wealth of material on the geography and culture of the Algerian people). The certificate of conferral was signed by Emperor Napoleon III. (Bryson 1979: 144)

Hodgson’s papers contain a draft of his letter to the general secretary of the Geographical Society of Paris, [Arnaud] d’Avezac, dated 10 November 1838 and meant to accompany some of

the materials collected by Hodgson in Algiers (see also Bowser 2009: 60-61). In it, Hodgson references an earlier honor conferred on him by a French monarch:

I should feel happy to know that the information which I now have the honor to communicate, has been deemed of any importance by His Majesty's Govt. Always deeply impressed with a sense of the high distinction conferred upon me, by His Majesty, I should be greatly pleased if the present document or any others of the numerous papers which I possess should be found useful in the interest of the French Colony at Algiers. (Cited in Mackall 1931: 333)

If Bryson's conjecture is correct, it is likely that Hodgson's Lingua Franca manuscript was among the materials that he either sold or donated to the French sometime prior to his departure from Algiers.

What happened to Hodgson's manuscript after it was handed over to the French? I noted earlier (see Section 2) that certain aspects of the *Dictionnaire* suggest that it was brought to publication by someone other than its original author. One of these is the inconsistent use of the practical orthography of Lingua Franca, in particular, the presence of variant spellings for about a hundred words and inconsistent notation of the geminates and affricates in words of Italian origin (Cifoletti 1989: 42; 2004: 83-84). Another aspect is the uneven distribution of the entries in the Lingua Franca vocabulary, with a larger number of entries overall, and a larger number of Gallicisms, in the later rather than earlier letters of the alphabet (Cifoletti 1989: 88). With respect to this last issue, Cifoletti (1980: 18-20) observes that Gallicisms are not found in the *Dictionnaire's* preface and dialogues, and that some of them unexpectedly refer to abstract concepts and have the appearance of having been mechanically adapted to Italian phonology. These features of the *Dictionnaire* are consistent with the hypothesis that the final editing of the manuscript was done by a Frenchman whose primary aim was to enhance the Lingua Franca vocabulary and who either did not entirely understand the logic behind the practical orthography or did not have the time to implement it consistently.

The print-shop that published the *Dictionnaire* also issued, in the same year, the slender work titled *Alger. Topographie, population, forces militaires de terre et de mer, acclimatement et ressources que le pays peut offrir à l'armée d'expédition, précédé d'un résumé historique; suivi d'un précis sur le service des troupes pendant un siège et orné d'un plan très exact de la ville et de ses environs. Par un Français qui a résidé à Alger* (Anonymous 1830b; see Cifoletti 2004: 255-257). As indicated by its title, this volume provides practical information about Algeria for the use of the French army. The description of the regency's linguistic situation, given in the section *Langue, mœurs, arts*, focuses the users' attention on the practicalities of communication by mentioning only one language, Lingua Franca. The passage in question refers to it in exactly the same way as in the *Dictionnaire's* title, namely as *Langue Franque ou Petit Mauresque*, seemingly establishing a deliberate link between the two publications:

A Alger, comme dans presque tout le Levant, mahométans et étrangers se servent d'un jargon composé d'italien, de français et d'espagnol, qu'on appelle Langue Franque ou Petit Mauresque, à l'aide de laquelle on entend facilement les trois langues, et l'on se fait entendre de toutes les espèces d'habitans. (Anonymous 1830b: 70)

The above passage suggests that the *Dictionnaire* was aimed as a companion to this more general volume about Algeria; in fact, the exclusion of Arabic and other languages spoken in the regency does not make sense except as a way to point to the *Dictionnaire*. The inconsistency of

mentioning only *Lingua Franca* in Anonymous (1830b) while including an Arabic vocabulary in Anonymous (1830a) is explainable by the apparent haste with which the volumes were produced. The author of Anonymous (1830b), though nameless, is nonetheless identified on the cover as “un Français qui a résidé à Alger”. The fact that the author of the *Dictionnaire* is not given even this modicum of identification suggests that his identity could not have been described in similar terms. Given the coordination between the two volumes, it is possible that the *Dictionnaire* was prepared for publication by the same individual, “un Français qui a résidé à Alger”.

In places, the descriptions of Algeria in Anonymous (1830b) bear more than a passing resemblance to comparable passages in Shaler’s *Sketches of Algiers*. For example, the similarities between the following descriptions of a fully armed janissary are too specific to be coincidental:

A Janissary, when equipped for battle, has one or more pairs of large pistols in his belt, with his scimitar or yatagan, a dagger in his bosom, and a long musket on his shoulder; all which are as highly ornamented as his circumstances will permit. When, costume included, he is not unfairly represented by the knave of diamonds in a pack of cards. (Shaler 1826: 27-28)

Un janissaire sous les armes, dit un voyageur qui a décrit ces contrées, a au moins une paire de pistolets, un cimeterre, un poignard et un fusil, le tout aussi riche que ses facultés peuvent le lui permettre. Avec cet équipement et son costume, il ne ressemble pas mal à un valet de carreau. (Anonymous 1830b: 77)

Prior to the publication of *Sketches of Algiers*, Shaler spent the summer of 1825 in France, “renewing old acquaintances” and endeavoring to convince influential people “that French enterprise should encompass Algiers”. On his return to the United States, in 1828, he would travel through France and renew his urging. *Sketches of Algiers* would soon be circulated in French translation (Shaler 1830) and when, in January 1830, the French council of state would adopt a plan to invade Algeria, it would be “very similar to that of Shaler, and the French expedition which captured Algeria in July, 1830, followed the general strategy laid down by the American consul” (Nichols 1950: 139-141).

Although their friendship was cut short by Shaler’s unexpectedly early death, Shaler had been a profound influence in Hodgson’s life. The younger man gratefully acknowledged Shaler’s impact:

There [in Algiers] it was my good fortune first to have acquired his [Shaler’s] friendship. The official dependence which I bore to him, secured for me, the invaluable lessons of his large experience with men and things, and what I esteemed more, the instruction of his virtuous mind. [...] I shall conclude this brief sketch of my lamented friend, with the heartfelt testimony, that never had my youth a more faithful guardian and counsellor, or my manhood a nobler object of grateful retrospect and worthy example. (Hodgson 1845: 166-168)

It would be safe to suppose that the evolving conflict between Algeria and France, not to mention the overall political situation concerning the Barbary regencies, were among the topics that Hodgson and Shaler had discussed, and perhaps agreed upon. Hodgson’s (1844: 9) description of the unfolding military conflict in North Africa as one “of civilization with semi-barbarism” and one “between undisciplined hordes and the science of European warfare” leave us in no doubt as to his sympathies. His sharing of his accumulated materials on Algeria with the

French, whether or not he was financially rewarded for doing so, was clearly in tune with Hodgson's political views and convictions.

4 Conclusion

This paper has presented and substantiated the hypothesis that the basis for the key publication on Lingua Franca, the *Dictionnaire de la langue franque* published anonymously in 1830, was laid by William Brown Hodgson's work on this language during the course of his language-training mission in Algiers. The vocabularies of Lingua Franca and Arabic, and the dialogues in Lingua Franca, were compiled during the first year of Hodgson's stay in Algiers, between April 1826 and May 1827, and were either sold or donated to an unknown French official sometime before his departure from Algiers in October 1829. In his work on the Lingua Franca manuscript, Hodgson used as his models the two textbooks that had apparently served him well in his study of Italian: Vergani (1823) and Veneroni (1800).

Neither Lingua Franca nor the Lingua Franca manuscript appear to be mentioned again in Hodgson's reports to the state department or in his other papers (at least, there is no indication to this effect in the materials assembled by Hodgson's biographer). Hodgson would not wipe Lingua Franca from his memory, however, and would refer to it in his lecture "The Science of Language: Sanscrit and Hebrew, the Two Written Primitive Languages Compared", published in 1868:

An educated African may be taught to speak English grammatically; but never will a whole people, conquered or subject, acquire the syntax of the dominant race. Hence, in this process of adopting a foreign language, an irregular or inchoate form of speech is produced. Here, it is called *patois*; and on the shores of the Mediterranean, *Lingua Franca*. (Cited in Bryson 1979: 148)

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