RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

M.Ed. In TESL Program
Language Group Specific Informational Reports

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In the Feinstein School of Education and Human Development

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A Brief Overview of Common Issues

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French Culture

• Independence is extremely important
  – This is instilled in young children very early on

• Privacy is another important element

• Individualism is praised

• French people are extremely proud of contributions made by French throughout history

• France has influenced Western culture in areas such as art, literature, and philosophy
Communication Style

• Physical contact is common throughout conversations
• A certain amount of formality is used when conversing with a new person

• Non-Verbal Communication
  – Brief eye contact is appropriate
  – Shaking hands is considered part of a greeting
  – Kissing on both cheeks is normal between close acquaintances as a greeting or parting

• Verbal Communication
  – Two forms of the personal pronoun for “you”
    – Familiar “tu” – used for family members, close friends, fellow students, etc.
    – Formal “vous” – used for everyone else; always use this form when uncertain

  – Titles are used widely
    • Monsieur – for man
    • Madame – for woman or Mademoiselle – for young woman
History of the French Language

• Until the late 1800s, the French population did not speak or understand much French
  – Each region of France spoke its own language

• Currently French is understood by about 90% of its citizens
  – About 10% of the population still understand a regional language in addition to French

• Today controversy still exists over the teaching of regional languages

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Languages of France

The map indicates the variety of languages spoken in France.

(http://www.kwintessential.co.uk)
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French Dialects

• **Metropolitan French**
  – *Spoken in Paris and considered standard French*

• **Meridional French**
  – *One of the regionally used dialects*

• **Outside of France**
  – *Belgium*
  – *Canada*
  – *Switzerland*
  – *Haiti*
## French Alphabet

*Same 26 letters as English alphabet, pronounced differently*

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Click to hear French Alphabet


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Similarities Between French & English

• **Syntax & Vocabulary**
  – *Derived from the same roots*
  – *More intellectual or technical the word, the more common in both languages*

• **Phonological Characteristics**
  – *Pronouncing English consonants*

• **Spelling**

• **Intonation**

• **Punctuation conventions**

• **Grammatical Systems**
  – *Parts of Speech*
  – *Word Order*
Differences Between French & English

• Word stress & rhythm are very different
• Agreement (hardest aspect of French)
  – Correspondence of gender, number and/or person
• Articles
  – Most nouns in French have an article in front
• Accents
  – 4 French accents for vowels
    • acute, grave, circumflex, dieresis
  – 1 French Accent for consonant
    • cedilla
Phonological Issues

• Vowel sounds are problematic
  – e.g. French has only one sound in the area of /i:/ and /I/
    • Confusion between live and leave
  – e.g. French has only one sound in the area of /u/ and /u:/
    • Confusion between pull and pool

• Word stress & rhythm
  – Word stress is placed on the last pronounced syllable in French; this is somewhat weaker in English
  – Vowels that are not stressed retain their pronunciation in French; these are weakened in English
Phonological Issues (continued)

• **Consonants**
  - *English lengthens vowels in stressed syllables before final voiced consonants*
    • e.g. sat and sad; pick and pig
  - *When pronouncing English words with the /ch/ sound, it becomes /sh/*
  - /h/ is often dropped in French pronunciation
  - /r/ is pronounced in French with the back of the tongue

• **Consonant Clusters**
  - *Consonants followed by /z/ do not occur normally in French words*
    • French speakers drop this –s after voiced consonants
  - *French speakers have tendency to stress multisyllabic words on the last syllable*
    • e.g. creating pronunciations such as “terribull” and “littull”
Grammar Issues

• Difficulty learning to put –s endings on third person singular present tense verbs

• “Do” has no equivalent in French
  – Causes problems forming interrogatives

• In French, present tense is used for actions or states that began in the past but continue in present
  – e.g. I work in Paris since August.

• French has no present progressive tense

• In French, the present tense is used to express a decision at the moment
  – e.g. I’m phoning her.
• French speakers commonly use the **to** infinitive with English modals
  – e.g. I can to swim.
• French speakers use a present tense in the place of **shall**
  – e.g. I set the table?
• French has no equivalent for –ing ending
• In French, adverbs are placed between verb and its object
• In French, quantity comes before past participle
  – e.g. I have too much eaten.
• French uses no article before names of professions
  – e.g. Sarah is teacher.
• In French, the indefinite article can be omitted after prepositions
  – e.g. Did Tom go out without hat?
• In French, nouns are masculine or feminine
• **Plural nouns in English are sometimes singular in French**
  – e.g. a jean, a short, a pajama

• **English noun+noun word structures**
  – e.g. teethbrush; a shoes shop

• **In French, adjectives generally follow the noun and for two or more adds “and”**
  – e.g. a short and red dress; she is the woman most beautiful

• **English expression is not structured with the same expression used in French**
  – e.g. discuss of a solution

• **French uses articles before days of the week or parts of the day**
  – e.g. It’s very quiet here the night.
  – I usually see him the Tuesday.
Orthography and Punctuation

• *Days of the week, months, languages and national adjectives are not capitalized in French*

• *Commas are used in French where they wouldn’t be in English*

• *Inverted commas are written differently in English*
Books


Images


Internet Sites


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