

French in Fashion

To those who claim that studying French in American schools is dépassé, let us respond with a definitive “Au contraire!” While increasing interest in Asia because of the rise of its economic importance is understandable, this does not mean that the economic, political and cultural importance of Europe and European languages should decrease. In fact, the bloc of European Union countries remains formidable, and its three institutional capitals in French-speaking Brussels, Strasbourg, and Luxembourg afford the language a strong presence on the continent. At the same time, it should be understood that French is not just a European language, but a global one. Its very existence as an international language with roots around the globe makes French an important world language playing its role in creating a world-class educational system, in finding jobs, and in building connections to people around the world for peaceful, humanitarian purposes and even for solving world problems. The relevance of French today and in the foreseeable future should not be discounted.

Let's examine some of the reasons why studying French is a good decision and inform students what they can do with their skills and knowledge of French:

1. Communicate with French speakers around the world

In contrast to languages with many speakers but limited to one or two countries, French is spoken by over 200 million people on five continents as a first or second language. French has the status of official language in 32 countries and governments worldwide, second only to the English-speaking bloc. Because, apart from English, French is the only language taught as a foreign language in every country, the opportunities for an American knowing French to be able to communicate with a non-English speaker are increased. Among the 56-member countries and govern-

ments of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, 30 French-speaking members are in Africa, which has seen the number of French-speakers triple since 1946 to 75 million today. Since electronic communication is increasingly important, it should be noted that French is among the top five languages used on the Internet according to the language of web pages.

Moreover, French is an American language for about two million people in the U.S. who speak French or Creole French at home. In addition, more than six million people in America speak French fluently as a second language. While most Americans are aware of the strong presence of French in Louisiana, Maine, Vermont, and New Hampshire, do they know that New York, California, and Florida have become the main centers of French in the U.S.? On top of that, the U.S. northern border puts it into contact with nearly 10 million people who speak French in Canada, officially a bilingual country.

2. Boost your academic skills

Possessing a rich vocabulary is an asset in any field, endeavor, and interpersonal relationship. Knowing French enriches English in many domains, e.g., vocabulary for legal, administrative, engineering, artistic, architectural, and culinary matters. Americans typically already have 15,000 French words in their vocabulary set, which can give them a head start in learning French.

Likewise, French is certainly an advantage in academic settings and especially on standardized tests. The richest source of vocabulary in English actually derives not directly from Latin but from French as a result of the Norman Conquest of England in 1066. Since at least one out of three words in English (if not more) has been borrowed from French, students studying French stand to improve their scores on comprehension of reading texts and vocabulary on standardized tests, such as the SAT,



Margot Steinhart explains why French is such a relevant language in the 21st Century

ACT, GRE, and LSAT. In general, knowledge of French, as well as other languages, enhances developmental skills in creative and critical thinking and in problem solving. It also stimulates brain function and memory.

3. Become proficient more quickly than with most world languages

French is among the languages that require the least amount of instructional hours in order for an English speaker to reach a high level of speaking proficiency, according to the Defense Language Institute. Approximately 720 hours (five contact hours a day) are required for a mature learner to reach an advanced level of speaking proficiency in French, whereas after 1,000 hours a student of Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, or Korean may only reach a low level of speaking proficiency.

By studying French first, students will have a head start when it comes to learning other languages. A high degree of motivation, perseverance, and commitment is required to learn another language, but having first learned French, students will have an advantage and will more easily be able to apply that knowledge to learning other languages with different character sets and tonal requirements.

French is a natural choice for speakers of Spanish, Italian, Romanian, and Portuguese because these languages share common Latin roots. In fact, speakers of one Romance language already have insight, albeit often intuitive, into grammatical structures and vocabulary of other Romance languages.

4. Increase options for undergraduate and graduate studies

While most colleges and universities encourage or require two or more years of sequential world language study, the more competitive institutions look favorably on longer-term programs of study. A higher score on a placement exam in French may mean that the student can benefit from

advanced courses more quickly at the post-secondary level. As an undergraduate or a graduate student, many students of French opt to complement or complete their studies in a variety of disciplines in a French-speaking country. In addition to American university-affiliated programs, the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie networks 630 French-language universities and more than 350 French faculties worldwide.

Clearly, researchers, particularly in science, technology, medicine, and business, have an edge over their competitors when they can read studies in the original language, i.e., French, without having to wait for a translation. Not all research is translated into English, and in many fields, the delay in publishing a study in English can disadvantage the English-only speaker. Most graduate schools require knowledge of at least one foreign language, and French is a common choice for many fields of study.

5. Invest in your career

Knowing French can be a plus in getting a job or advancing in any field. It can also provide opportunities for networking globally. Employers eagerly seek candidates with an understanding of French language, culture, and business practices, for these skills are critical to the company's success. French speakers are in demand in banking and finance, international market analysis, diplomacy, hotel management, tourism, translation and interpretation, international trade, journalism, aviation, national security, education, health care, customer service, and law enforcement.

To the U.S., the importance of Canada, where French is an official language, cannot be understated. Canada is the largest bilateral trading partner with the U.S., and Quebec alone is our eighth largest trading partner. With headquarters in Quebec, Bombardier is a global leader in aerospace and rail transportation and SNC-Lavalin is number one in international engineering. Americans frequently see products with French labels, and this is a reflection

Advocacy

of American trade with Canada, as well as other French-speaking regions.

France is the second largest investor in the U.S., responsible for the creation of 700,000 jobs. Likewise, the U.S. is the leading investor in France, and over 3,700 American companies operate in France. In addition, France is the world's fifth largest economy and Europe's second largest market. Well-known French-owned companies in the U.S. include Michelin, L'Oréal, BiC, Atari, Louis Dreyfus Property Group, Veolia Environmental Services, Alcatel-Lucent, and Air Liquide.

6. Connect your future to cutting-edge fields in science and technology

For students who wish to be on the cutting edge of science and technology around the globe, French provides an entrée into a number of areas of interest to scientists and technical experts. French-speaking countries are at the forefront of technological innovations and scientific research and discoveries, such as nanotechnology, nuclear energy, aerospace technology, voice compression, high-speed rail services, fiber optics, microchips, video gaming, commercial satellites, HIV virus research, medical genetics (the Human Genome Project), and reconstructive surgery.

7. Enjoy special leisure-time activities

Sports enthusiasts can follow their favorite events and athletes in a number of sports popular in the French-speaking world. For example,

- Cycling in the Tour de France and Paris-Brest-Paris
- Tennis in the French Open



**Experience the best of Canada,
Study in Montreal!**

Canada's most exciting
and bilingual city





Study English, get free French
Study French, get free English

Practice for the DELF
or TOEFL exams

Homestay or
Residence

Special group
study programs
and packages





A.L.I. – Académie Linguistique Internationale
info@studymontreal.com 1.514.270.3886 #228

www.studymontreal.com

- Horseracing at Longchamps
- Motorcycle racing and sports car racing, like the 24 Heures du Mans
- Formula 1 automobile racing, Monaco's Grand Prix
- Off-road racing in the Rallye Le Dakar
- Baseball and hockey matches against Canadian teams

Since the revival of the Olympic Games in the late 19th century by Pierre de Coubertin, French has been an official language used to announce events and winners of medals at the various Olympic events.

In the US, 30 percent of the foreign books published and 50 percent of the foreign films watched are in French. French, and French-Canadian films in particular, have gained international recognition and appear regularly in the U.S. French film production (500 films a year) ranks number two in the world. A number of French actresses have been nominated for Best Actress in the Oscars, and more recently, Juliette Binoche, and Marion Cotillard have won the coveted prize. A number of French films have been Oscar-nominated, such as *Amélie (Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain)*, *The Chorus (Les choristes)*, *Merry Christmas (Joyeux Noël)*, and *The Class (Entre les murs)*.

8. Benefit more from travel experiences

Every continent has French-speaking destinations which are more enjoyable when visitors can interact with the local residents. France is the most visited country in the world, with 75 million tourists every year.

French is an influential language spoken and in this hemisphere over 33 million people have an understanding of it. Some of these destinations include Québec, New Brunswick, St. Pierre and Miquelon, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Haiti, St. Martin, French Guyana, and Louisiana.

9. Enrich your appreciation of cultural contributions of the French-speaking world

The impact of the French-speaking world on literature, philosophy, and the arts (music, painting, sculpture, film, photography, theater, dance, cuisine, fashion, and architecture) is particularly noteworthy. A small sample:

- Literature: Victor Hugo, Albert Camus, Jean-Marie Le Clézio (France), Antonine Maillet (Québec), Aimé Césaire (Martinique)
- Philosophy: Jean-Paul Sartre (France), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Switzerland)
- Painting: René Magritte (Belgium), Pierre Auguste Renoir (France)
- Film: François Truffaut (France), Xavier Dolan (Québec)
- Physical Theater: Cirque du Soleil (Québec); Compagnie Pas de dieux (France)



POUR LE PLAISIR
D'APPRENDRE LE FRANÇAIS



- KIDS - FRENCH RIVIERA - 9/14
- JUNIOR SUMMER - 12/18
- JUNIOR WINTER - 12/18
- ACADEMIC YEAR - 12/19
- STUDENTS - 18/25
- INTERNSHIP
- ACCOMMODATION

- **Residential Junior Summer Camps in France** with FLE classes and full activity and excursion programme. In Paris (14-18 yo) to learn French and discover the lively, fashionable and historic capital of France ; in Cannes (15-18 yo) to learn French and enjoy summer vacation on the hip French Riviera ; in Biarritz (12-18 yo) for a fun French + Surf programme.
- **Junior Winter and Spring programme** on the French Riviera with FLE tuition and activities or junior winter ski programme.
- **Academic year programmes** with highschool and host family immersion in various locations in France from 4 weeks to a full school year. A unique experience to improve your French skills and discover the culture and daily life in France.

Contacts : infos@educationenfrance.com www.educationenfrance.com +33 1 39 70 87 11

- Vocal music: MC Solar (Senegal/France), Jean-Jacques Goldman (France), Natalie Dessay (France), Céline Dion, Isabelle Boulay (Québec)
- Fashion: Yves Saint-Laurent (France), Jean-Claude Poitras (Québec)
- Architecture: Charles-Édouard Jeanneret-Gris, Le Corbusier (Switzerland/France), Gustave Eiffel (France)

10. Understand a variety of world perspectives

French speakers can appreciate cultural diversity because the language is spoken in more than 56 countries. A knowledge of French and its connection to such a rich tapestry of cultures in Francophone countries, will help those working toward global consensus and peace, and participate in humanitarian efforts, for French is an official language or a working language in many international agencies and organizations, including: United Nations, NATO, European Union, Doctors without Borders, International Olympic Committee, Universal Postal Union, Amnesty International, UNESCO, OECD, International Red Cross, International Labor Bureau, Council of Europe, WHO.

As a language that can take us around the world to communicate with French-speakers, provide unique educational and cultural experiences, enrich our use of English, advance our careers, and shape our view of the world, French is certainly a vibrant, vital, and visible international language. As Jean-Benoît Nadeau and Julie Barlow, authors of *The Story of French*, affirm, "French is not in decline, but it is relevant today and will be tomorrow: Outside of English," they ask, "what other language can give immediacy, without translation, to the reality of a Swiss diplomat in Geneva, a Belgian engineer, a Senegalese intellectual, a Congolese child-soldier, a Lebanese teacher, an Algerian academician, or a Polynesian fisherman?" *Bien sûr*, the answer is French! Of course! **X**

References

- Barlow, Julie and Nadeau, Jean-Benoît. "40 Surprising Facts about French: From *The Story of French*," French Language Advocacy Kit: *The World Speaks French*. Carbondale, IL: American Association of Teachers of French, (CD), 2009.
- Bullock, Barbara, "The Ease and Challenges for an English Speaker Learning French," French Language Advocacy Kit: *The World Speaks French* (CD). Carbondale, IL: American Association of Teachers of French: 2009.
- Centre de la Francophonie des Amériques.
<http://www.francophoniedesameriques.com/>

The Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center Catalog, Chapter 2, updated June 2003.

Eddy, P. A. (1981). The effect of foreign language study in high school on verbal ability as measured by the scholastic aptitude test-verbal. final report. U.S.; District of Columbia, from ERIC database

France welcomes investment and talent. Paris: Invest in France Agency, Nov. 2008

Francophonie. Lyon: Collection du Moutard, 2009.

"French Major," The Princeton Review.

<http://www.princetonreview.com/Majors.aspx?page=1&cip=160901>

"Top 10 Languages," Internet World Stats: Usage and Population Statistics. <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats7.htm>

Invest in France — Mach 2009 Report, [http://www.invest-in-france.org/uploads/files-en/09-04-](http://www.invest-in-france.org/uploads/files-en/09-04-27_143056_090424_Rapport_annuel_UK_web.pdf)

27_143056_090424_Rapport_annuel_UK_web.pdf

Nadeau, Jean-Benoît. Le Français, Autre Langue de mondialisation et où va le français, Speech at the Alliance Française de Chicago, 3/12/08.

Nadeau, Jean-Benoît and Barlow, Julie. "Modern Quebec: Cutting Edge Culture in French," French Language Advocacy Kit: *The World Speaks French* (CD). Carbondale, IL: American Association of Teachers of French: 2009.

Nadeau, Jean-Benoît and Barlow, Julie. *The Story of French*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2006.

Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie.

<http://www.francophonie.org/oif/>

Shryock, Richard. "French: The Most Practical Foreign Language," Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech), <http://www.fl.vt.edu/French/whyfrench.html> .

Taking action together: Francophonie 2006-2009, Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, Service de communication de la Francophonie, 2009.

Timpe, E. (1979). "The effect of foreign language study on ACT scores." ADFL Bulletin, 11(2), 10-11.

Margot M. Steinhart, Ph.D., is adjunct lecturer in French at Northwestern University. She is past president of the American Association of Teachers of French (AATF) and is currently president of the Alliance Française du North Shore (IL), and president of the American Society of the French Academic Palms. She is the coordinator for the French Language Advocacy Kit: *The World Speaks French*.

Spanish Abroad in South America!


Flexible programs that fit your schedule!


- Spanish Programs
- Academic Credit
- Internship
- Volunteer
- Start date every Monday of the year

Experiences of a lifetime!
Get to know local culture, night life and all of the must-see attractions with ECELA.


School location exchanges
Alternate school locations without missing a beat in your ECELA spanish program.

Contact Us
info@ecela.com / www.ecela.com / Tel: 1 866 5778693







Buenos Aires
Bariloche




Lima
Cusco



Santiago





E.L.F.E

Since 1984

A unique language course experience in the heart of Paris

- Intensive French immersion programs for adults in mini-groups (3 to 6 people)
- All levels, all year round
- Quality cultural activities (excursions, wine tasting, cooking...)
- Carefully selected homestay accommodation (family, hotel, apartments)

ELFE - Ecole de Langue Française pour Etrangers
www.elfe-paris.com
contact@elfe-paris.com
 Tel : +33 (0)1 48 78 73 00