RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

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

Produced by Graduate Students in the M.Ed. In TESL Program
In the Feinstein School of Education and Human Development

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FRENCH

A Brief Overview of Common Issues

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TESL 539

Spring 2010

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*

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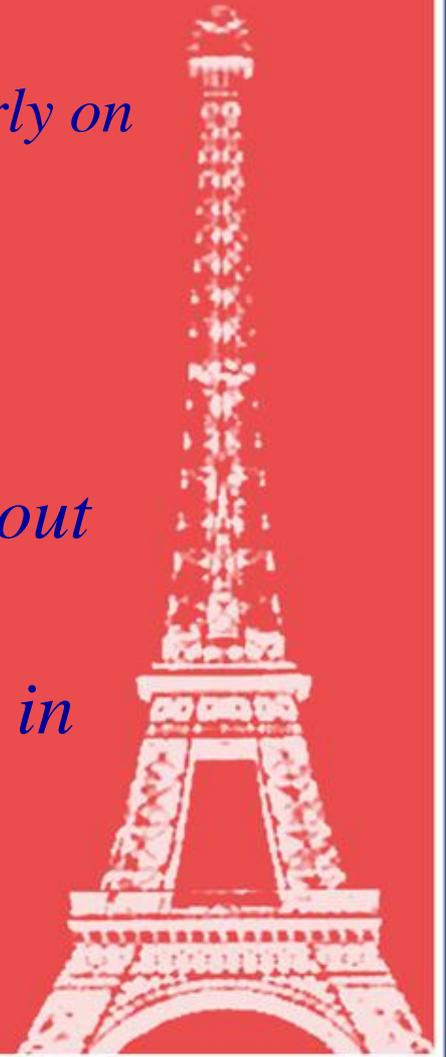
Communication Style

- *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*

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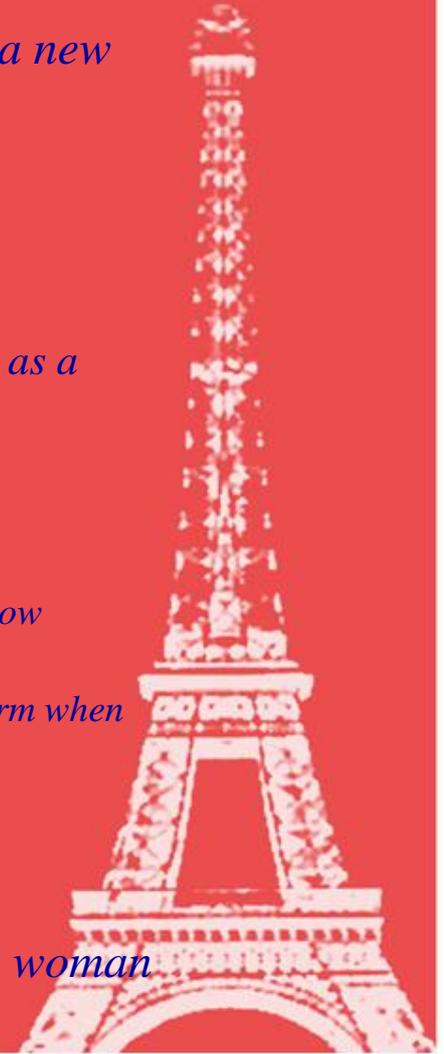
History of the French Language

- *Until the late 1800s, the French population did not speak or understand much French*
  - *Each region of France spoke it's 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*
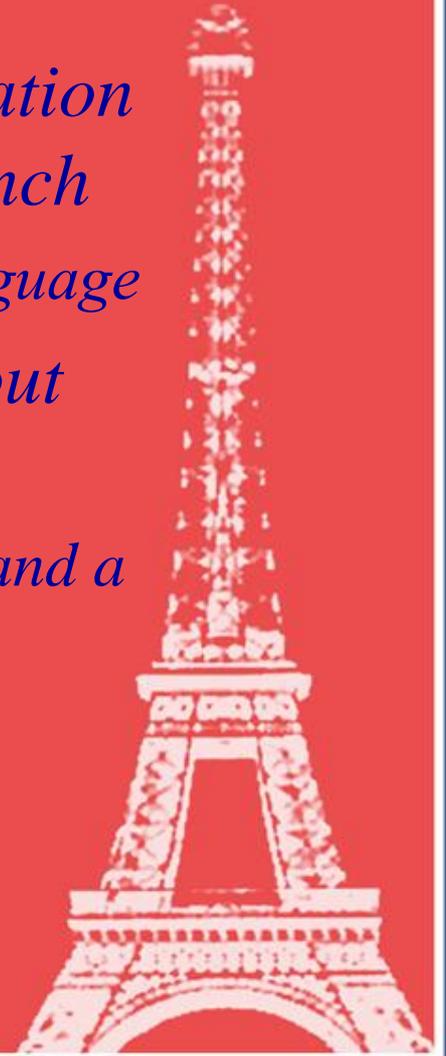
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Languages of France

The map indicates the variety of languages spoken in France.
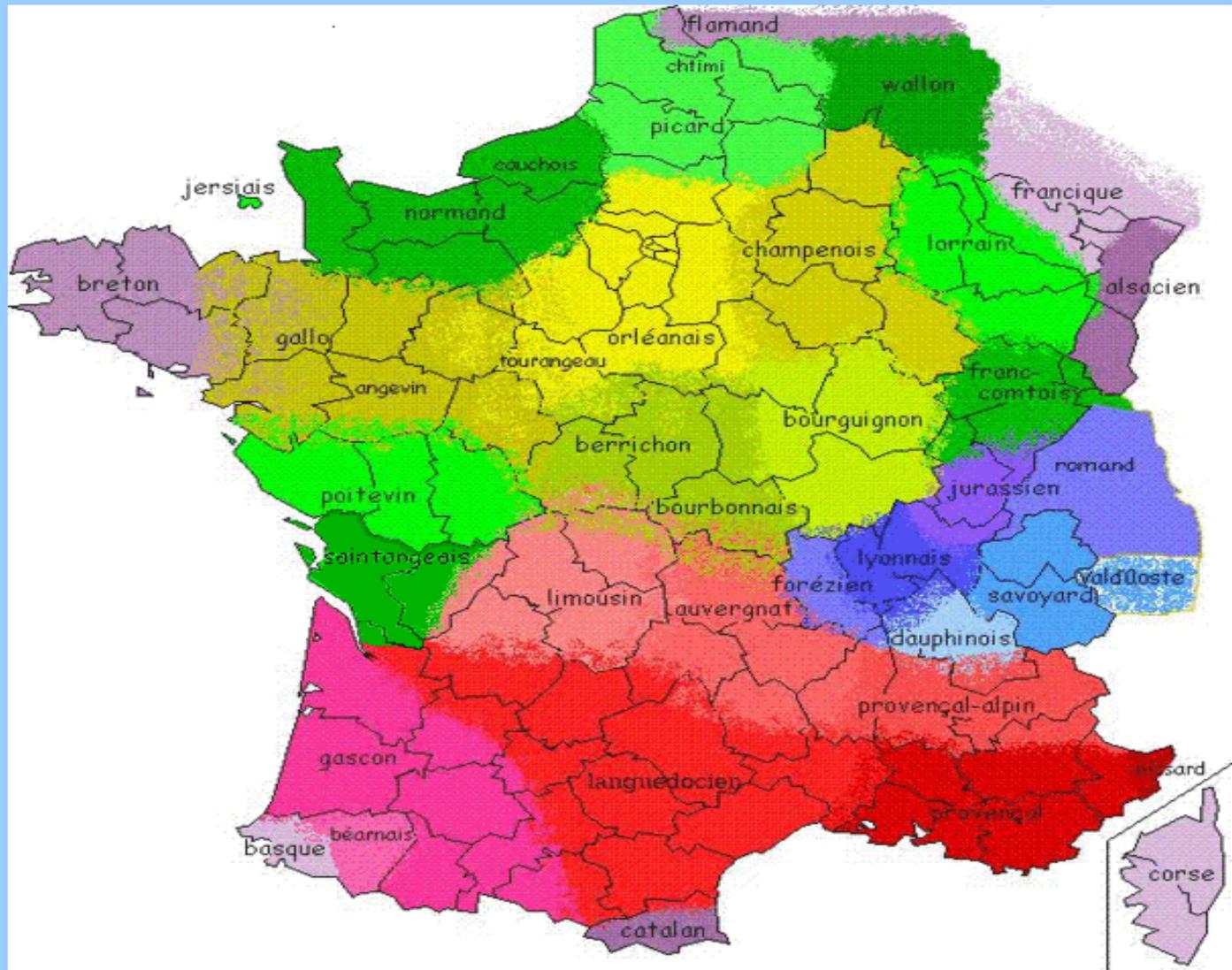
(http://www.kwintessential.co.uk)
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French Dialects

- *Metropolitan French*
  - *Spoken in Paris and considered standard French*

- *Meridional French*
  - *One of the regionally used dialects*

- *Outside of France*
  - *Belgium*
  - *Canada*
  - *Switzerland*
  - *Haiti*

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French Alphabet

Same 26 letters as English alphabet, pronounced differently

Letter	Pronunciation	Letter	Pronunciation
A	ah	N	en
B	bay	O	op
C	say	P	pay
D	day	Q	koo
E	uk	R	ehr
F	ef	S	es
G	ghay	T	tay
H	ash	U	oo
I	ee	V	vay
J	jhay	W	doo-blaw-vay
K	ka	X	ex
L	el	Y	ee-grek
M	em	Z	zed

Click to hear French Alphabet

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*

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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*

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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*
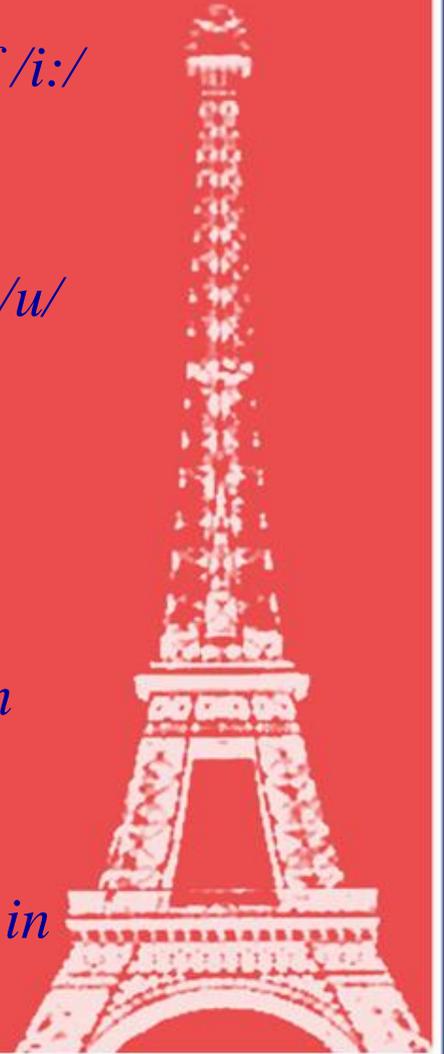
Phonological Issues (continued)

- *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"*

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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.*

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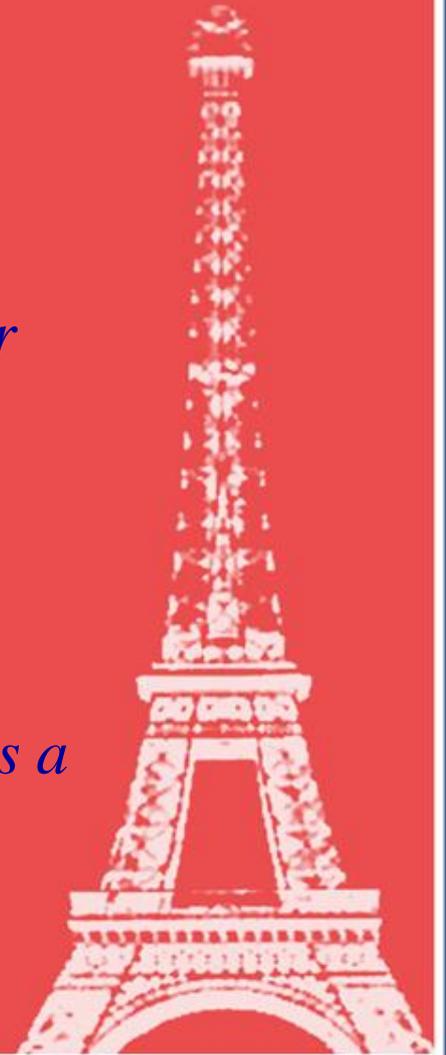
Grammar Issues (continued)

- *French speakers commonly use the <u>to</u> infinitive with English modals*
  - *e.g. I can to swim.*
- *French speakers use a present tense in the place of <u>shall</u>*
  - *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*

Grammar Issues (continued)

- *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.*

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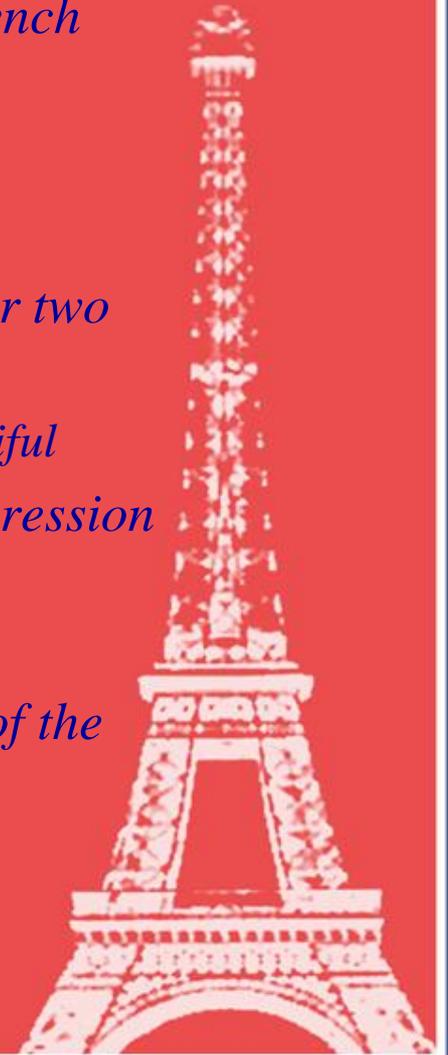
Orthography and Punctuation

- *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*

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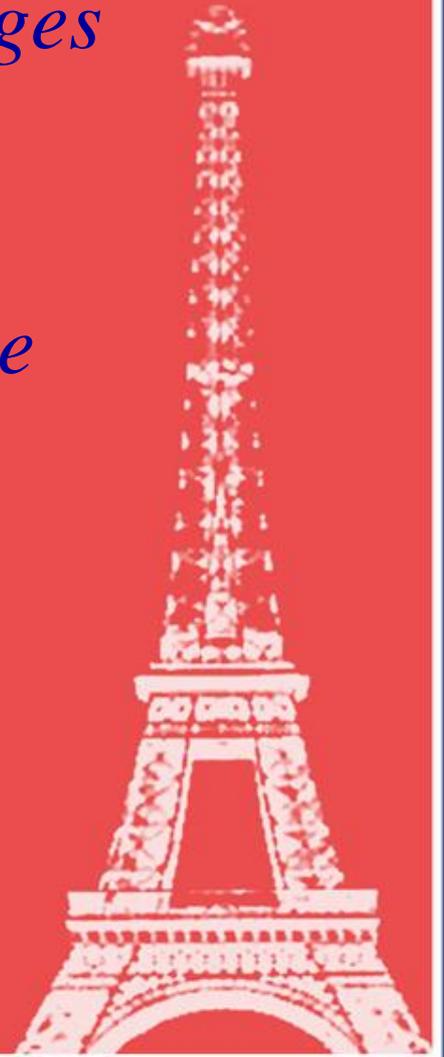
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Images

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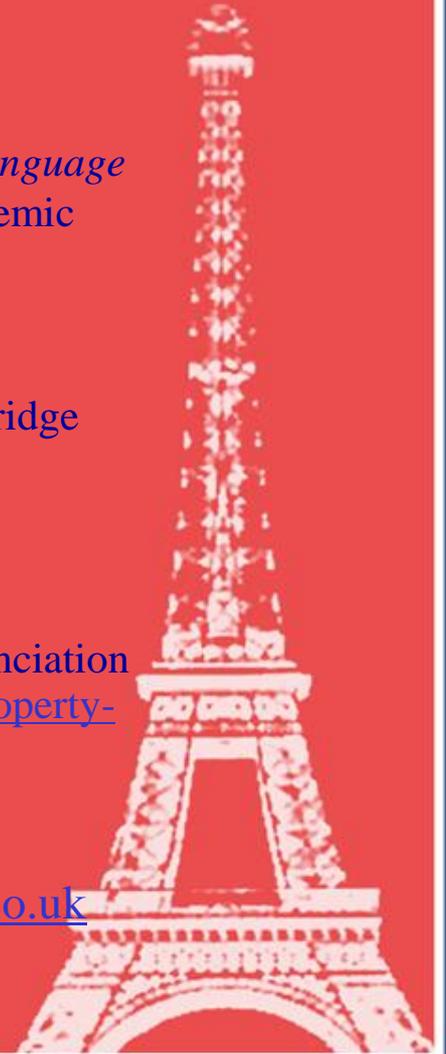
Internet Resources

Internet Sites

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