



IGCSE

French

**French
IGCSE**

General Introduction

Welcome to your IGCSE French course!

This course is designed for students tackling the IGCSE French examinations set by Edexcel. The course is not designed for complete beginners ~ it assumes that you have some experience of the French language, probably a basic knowledge from school days. Don't worry, however, if this was some time ago! Our first few lessons are designed to remind you of the basic 'building blocks' of the French language and to prepare you for the IGCSE-style exercises in the rest of the course.

As well as preparation for the IGCSE exams, this course also aims to give you experience and confidence in a wide variety of French conversational situations. Edexcel also set an oral (speaking) exam (Paper 3) but this is *optional* and graded separately. The practical requirements for this can be tricky, though by no means impossible, for distance learners to deal with.

The assumption for students on this course is that you are *not* taking this optional, extra exam but that you wish to improve your spoken French for a variety of other purposes ~ travel abroad, possible higher level study, *etc.* After all the work you and your Tutor will be putting in, it would be a shame for you not to feel reasonably confident using the language in realistic, useful situations and through actual speech rather than on paper; you might consider Edexcel's formal certification of competence at the spoken language to be a worthwhile linked target in its own right ~ or you may, at least, wish to keep your options open on this practical element and (for instance) discuss it with your Tutor before confirming your exam entry, with or without the Oral, accordingly.



Oxford Open Learning

Modern Languages at IGCSE

The Edexcel IGCSE in French requires students to:

- develop the ability to listen to and understand the spoken target language in a range of contexts and a variety of styles
- read and respond to different types of written language
- communicate in writing
- understand and apply a range of vocabulary and structures
- develop effective language learning and communication skills
- for students taking the optional paper, Paper 3: Speaking – communicate in speech for different purposes.

The IGCSE examination requires you to find things out for yourself. This course can help you in that direction, but it cannot provide all the answers for you. You learn French by reading, writing, speaking and listening to as much French as possible, and there are no short cuts. This course will give you hints on how to gain experience in each of these areas, but it cannot do the experiencing for you.

How to use the Course

The OOL French course consists of a set of printed lessons and an accompanying CD. The course is divided into five modules. The first four modules tackle the basics of the French language and provide broad coverage of the five topic areas identified by the Edexcel specification. The fifth module extends this coverage to focus on speaking and listening skills.

Within each module you will find a number of lessons, which contain explanations and activities to get you thinking about and using the language as much as possible. At the end of many of the lessons there is a tutor-marked assignment (TMA). You should send your answers to these assignments to your tutor, who will return them to you with comments, marks and a set of ‘model’ answers.

Course Structure

The course is arranged as follows:

Lesson Title	Edexcel Topic Area
Module One: About Me	
1. Who's at Home?	C
2. Appearance and Personality	All
3. Greetings	All
Tutor-marked Assignment A	
4. Family Life	C
5. Nationalities, Countries, Jobs	A
Tutor-marked Assignment B	
6. Hobbies	E
7. Joining Clubs	E
Module Two; Day to Day Life	
8. The Weather and Seasons	A
Tutor-marked Assignment C	
9. The Domestic Environment	C
10. House and Home	C
11. Towns and Regions	A
Tutor-marked Assignment D	
12. Daily Routine	C
13. Mealtimes	C
14. School and Future Plans	B
Tutor-marked Assignment E	
15. Studying	B
Module Three: Holidays and Travel	
16. Travel, Transport, Finding the Way	A
17. Holiday Time and Travel	A
18. Buying Tickets	A/D
Tutor-marked Assignment F	
19. Tourism	A
20. Talking about Holidays	A
21. Accommodation	A
22. Holiday Activities	A
Tutor-marked Assignment G	
23. Keeping in Touch	D
24. Lost Property	A/D
Module Four: Modern Life	
25. Emergency Services	D
Tutor-marked Assignment H	
26. Domestic Chores	C
27. Healthy Living	E

28. Part-Time Jobs and Work Experience	B
Tutor-marked Assignment I	
29. Entertainments	E
30. Shopping	E
31. The Environment	D
32. General Revision and Conclusion	All
Tutor-marked Assignment J	

Module Five: Speaking and Listening Skills

Module Introduction

33. Listening and Speaking Basics	All
34. Everyday Transactions	A
35. Tourist Situations	A
36. Narration and Giving Information	A/C

Tutor Marked Assignment K

37. Practice Oral Examination	
-------------------------------	--

Glossary

How to Use the CD-Rom

The CD which accompanies this course is designed to be used with some of the exercises and tests in Modules Four and Five on Speaking and Listening Skills. If you are listening to the CD on computer you will be able to pause the tracks using the on-screen pause button. If you are using an audio-CD player, or other compatible equipment, you will need to be able to stop and start the recording, rewind, *etc.* You may prefer to copy the contents of the CD on to an audio-tape (cassette) and listen to that instead ~ it's up to you.

The CD contains exercises which will help you develop your skills in understanding spoken French and to increase your confidence in speaking the language. The final track consists of a past GCSE listening test, which will give you valuable practice in the skills required by this part of the examination.

The exercises and activities in the course folder which require you to listen to the CD will usually have the following symbol in the margin:



Additional Study

Although the OOL course is a self-contained study guide, no one book or course could completely prepare you for the IGCSE examination. The examination is designed to test your ability to use and understand French in

many different situations, and to enable you to gain insights into the culture and civilisation of France and French-speaking countries. It is impossible to gain this type of understanding from a set of lesson notes alone.

You should therefore try to read as widely as possible in the French language. Magazines, newspapers and short stories by modern authors are all excellent ways of extending your knowledge and understanding of French. National Tourist Office brochures printed in French also provide useful material. When reading this extra material, try to get the general sense of the text without using a dictionary. If you have time, go back and note new and useful vocabulary and phrases.

For listening practice it is also a good exercise to check on what language programmes are available on radio and TV ~ useful oral practice may also be found in this way. The BBC will send you a brochure of their language programmes on request. You can also borrow multimedia or audio courses from your local library. No extra practice is ever wasted in language study!

If you can arrange a stay in France sometime during the final six months of your preparation, so much the better. Even a day trip to France can give you some very handy real-life experience, provided you make the most of it!

Another idea to consider is attending a French conversational class. This would help you to gain confidence when working alongside others and would give you the chance to compare your progress with other students preparing for the same examination. Through college notice boards you may also find there are French students wishing to exchange conversation (where you take turns practising French and English). This is a very cheap and useful way of effectively getting one-to-one tuition, thereby improving your skills and vocabulary. Speaking and listening tests performed well help to balance out any problems experienced in the writing tests!

There are also a number of good books and audio courses available in bookshops and libraries, which would help you to widen your vocabulary and gain extra practice. You would also benefit from having a good book on French grammar.

The Edexcel Specification (4FR0)

This course is designed particularly to assist candidates taking the examination set by Edexcel (syllabus/specification 4FR0).

The Edexcel examination is particularly suitable for people studying by open learning because of the way speaking is assessed. While some boards ask the teacher to assess speaking skills throughout their course of study (very difficult for open learners), with Edexcel your speaking skills may be assessed during a single oral examination at the end of the course.

The details of the syllabus will be explained in more depth below. The syllabus is invaluable as a reference tool, as it lists all requirements in great detail and provides very useful lists of vocabulary and linguistic structures. Don't be put off by the long lists; by the end of the course it won't look so daunting!

You should be sure to acquire your own copy of the syllabus, either via the Edexcel Publications Dept or from <http://www.edexcel.com>. If you download it, keep it safe and accessible in electronic form and look at it from time to time. As you progress through the course you should find the exam board's targets and procedures making increasingly focused sense to you. Meanwhile you will probably not wish or need to print off more than a few crucial pages as hard-copies; much of the document is either broader educational background ('Links to PHSE' *etc*) or under-the-bonnet detail about markschemes (which can nonetheless be informative in terms of exam technique; this will be mentioned here and there in the course, and very probably also by your Tutor in connection with TMAs).

As you approach the examination, it will also be helpful to purchase and tackle past papers from Edexcel. This will be dealt with as part of the course.

Using the Internet

All students would benefit from access to the Internet. You will find a wealth of information on all the topics in your course. As well as the Edexcel website (www.edexcel.com), you should get into the habit of checking the Oxford Open Learning site (www.ool.co.uk) where you may find news, additional resources and interactive features as time goes by. If you have not already done so, you may register for your free copy of *How to Study at Home*, our 200-page guide to home learning, or enrol on further courses. Put it on your Favourites list now!

Grades Available

The IGCSE in French (and the IGCSE in French) qualifications comprise two external assessments, Paper 1 and Paper 2. Each paper is targeted at grades A* to G.

Students who fail to achieve grade G will be awarded 'Ungraded'.

Separately endorsed Assessment of Spoken Language

Students can also be entered for the **optional**, separately assessed and separately endorsed speaking examination.

This speaking examination, Paper 3, will be awarded separately from Paper 1 and Paper 2 on a grading scale from A* to G. The grade awarded for this optional assessment will be reported separately on the student's final certificate.

There will normally be an additional fee for each student entering for this optional paper.

Summary of Scheme of Assessment

Paper 1: Listening

Paper code: 4FR0/01 (French)

- Externally assessed
- Availability: June series
- First assessment: June 2011

Overview of content: Topic Areas

- home and abroad
- education and employment
- house, home and daily routines
- the modern world and the environment
- social activities, fitness and health.

Overview of assessment:

- The paper is assessed through an examination paper set and marked by Edexcel, lasting 30 minutes, plus 5 minutes' reading time.
- The total number of marks for the paper is 30.

Paper 2: Reading and Writing

Paper code: 4FR0/02 (French)

- Externally assessed
- Availability: June series
- First assessment: June 2011

Overview of content: Topic Areas

- home and abroad
- education and employment
- house, home and daily routines
- the modern world and the environment
- social activities, fitness and health.

Overview of assessment:

- The paper is assessed through an examination paper lasting 1 hour and 30 minutes, set and marked by Edexcel.
- The total number of marks for the paper is 60, with 30 marks for reading and 30 marks for writing.

Separately endorsed Assessment of Spoken Language

Paper 3: Speaking

Paper code: 4FR0/03 (French)

- Externally assessed
- Availability: June series
- First assessment: June 2011

Overview of content: Topic Areas

- home and abroad
- education and employment
- house, home and daily routines
- the modern world and the environment
- social activities, fitness and health.

Overview of assessment:

- Maximum 10 minutes
- The total number of marks for the paper is 60.

All questions in each paper will be in the target language (*i.e.* French). Students will be required to answer in the target language. Rubrics will be in the target language and in English.

Students must not use dictionaries for any of the examination papers.

Detailed Content

Paper 1: Listening

The paper is assessed through an examination paper lasting 30 minutes, plus 5 minutes' reading time paper, set and marked by Edexcel.

The total number of marks for the paper is 30.

The examination will cover a range of topic areas selected from those listed below. The examination will consist of several short recordings on a tape played by the invigilator. Students will have five minutes' reading time before the tape is played to read through the paper and familiarise themselves with it. The recordings, each of which will be heard twice, will last no longer than 30 minutes in total including pauses. All texts will be spoken by native speakers.

Detailed instructions for the conduct of this paper are available in *Appendix 3 – Instructions for the conduct of examinations (Papers 1 and 2)*.

There will be **two** sections, as follows:

Section A (15 marks)

Students will be required to listen to a range of factual and non-factual material of varying lengths, in different contexts and in different registers.

The extracts will increase in length. The first passages will be the shortest and will be tested through non-verbal responses, such as ticked boxes or matching exercises. Subsequent passages will be tested through a range of question types, both verbal and non-verbal. Questions targeted at grades D to G will require mainly non-verbal answers.

Section B (15 marks)

There will be two longer extracts in Section B. Comprehension will be tested through a range of question types, both verbal and non-verbal.

Assessment

Students' responses will be assessed for communication only, according to a mark scheme. The grammatical accuracy of the students' language will **not** be assessed in this paper. Answers written in English will score no marks.

Question types

Question types include:

- grid, form or plan completion
- multiple choice
- box-ticking
- note taking
- gap-filling
- true or false
- true or false, with textual support
- matching, for example:
- ideas or sequences with pictures
- a named person with a statement
- summary
- questions in the target language

Students will be assessed on their ability to:

- identify and note main points
- deduce the meaning of words from context
- extract specific details
- identify points of view
- show some understanding of unfamiliar language
- understand reference to past, present and future events
- recognise attitudes, emotions and opinions
- draw inferences and conclusions.

Paper 2: Reading and Writing

The paper is assessed through an examination paper set and marked by Edexcel, lasting 1 hour and 30 minutes.

The total number of marks for the paper is 60, with 30 marks for reading and 30 marks for writing.

Students will be required to read a range of authentic factual and non-factual written material of varying length, in different registers and contexts, and from different sources. These may include advertisements, short passages, messages, letters, information leaflets, faxes, emails, website pages, newspaper and magazine articles.

The questions will require a combination of non-verbal responses and answers in the target language. In order to answer the questions, students will need to use a range of reading techniques such as skimming, scanning and in-depth reading for details.

Detailed instructions for the conduct of this paper are available in *Appendix 3 – Instructions for the conduct of examinations (Papers 1 and 2)*.

The paper will consist of **three** sections, detailed below. Students are advised to spend about **30 minutes** on each section.

Section A

Part 1 (15 marks for Reading)

The aim of Section A, Part 1, is to assess the students' abilities in understanding and using information from a range of texts. The texts will be related to the topic areas below.

Answers required in Section A, Part 1, will be mainly non-verbal. Answers will be assessed for communication only, according to a mark scheme. Grammatical accuracy will not be assessed in this part of the paper.

Part 2 (10 marks for Writing)

Students will be required to write about 50 words in the target language, on a topic related to the final reading passage in Section A, Part 1. The response will be assessed for communication and language according to the assessment criteria.

Section B

Part 1 (5 marks for Reading)

Students will be required to answer questions on **one** reading passage.

Answers required in Section B, Part 1, will be mainly non-verbal.

Part 2 (10 marks for Reading, 5 marks for Writing)

Students will be required to read a longer passage and to respond to a series of questions. 10 marks will be available for Reading, according to the mark scheme. Writing will be assessed according to the assessment criteria. Students will be required to show the ability to manipulate the language of the original text, and/or to use their own words and phrases to express ideas contained in the text.

Section C (15 marks for Writing)

Students will select **one** writing task from a choice of three. Students will be expected to write a continuous response, of between 140 and 150 words, in the target language. Students aiming at grade C and above will be expected to express opinions and to use past, present and future tenses and more complex language.

The tasks will encompass a range of writing styles, such as narrative, descriptive, discursive, and a range of formats such as a formal or informal letter, a report, an article, a page from a diary, the script of a speech etc.

The 15 marks available for this section will be sub-divided into 5 marks for content and communication; 5 marks for knowledge and application of language and 5 marks for accuracy.

This section is marked according to the assessment criteria.

Assessment of the Reading sections

Students will be assessed on their ability to:

- identify and note main points
- deduce the meaning of words from context
- extract specific details
- identify points of view
- show some understanding of unfamiliar language
- understand and respond to references to past, present and future events
- recognise attitudes, emotions and opinions
- draw inferences and conclusions
- understand grammatical structures and functions, in context.

Question types

A range of question types will be used which may include:

- grid, form or plan completion
- multiple choice
- true or false
- true or false, with textual support
- box-ticking

- note taking
- gap-filling
- matching, for example:
 - words from the text with synonyms, antonyms or definitions
 - summary sentences with different paragraphs of the text
 - two halves of one sentence
- ideas or sequences with pictures
- a named person with a statement
- summary
- questions in the target language.

Paper 3: Speaking Test (optional, separately endorsed)

Maximum 10 minutes.

The total number of marks for the paper is 60.

Students may take a speaking test in addition to Papers 1 and 2. The speaking test will recognise the achievement of the student in speaking the target language.

The test will be divided into **two** sections. Each student chooses the topic area for Section A; the interviewer chooses **two** additional topic areas for the two conversations in Section B. Overall, each student will have covered three of the five topic areas listed on page 11.

Section A: Presentation and discussion based on a single picture

Maximum 4 minutes.

Total of 20 marks.

Each student will give a presentation for up to **one minute** about their chosen picture. A conversation with the interviewer about the picture will then follow, for up to **three** minutes.

The student will be assessed according to the criteria on pages 16 and 17. Up to 5 marks will be awarded for each of these areas:

- communication, content, intonation and pronunciation
- spontaneity and fluency
- knowledge and application of language
- accuracy.

Prior to the speaking test, each student must choose a single picture based on a topic area (see below). The student must write the relevant topic area on the back of the picture. The student must also provide a copy of the picture for the centre-appointed interviewer at the start of the test. The picture may be a

photograph or a drawing. If it is in colour, a clear black and white copy for the interviewer is acceptable.

The same picture must not be used by more than three students from the centre, in any examination session.

Edexcel will provide examples of suitable pictures for this section of the test. These are for illustrative purposes only and must not be used for the examination. They can be found in the *Edexcel IGCSE in French – Sample Assessment Materials* document.

The pictures chosen should reflect the students' interests. They may, for example, be family photographs, or pictures of sporting or school events. They may be chosen from newspapers or magazines. The pictures should include objects, people and interaction, and should allow students to demonstrate their speaking proficiency appropriately. Pictures containing writing, which may give students assistance in the discussion, are not allowed.

A copy of the picture must also be attached to each student's cover sheet (see *Appendix 5 – Candidate cover sheet (Paper 3)*) before being sent to the Edexcel examiner with the audiotapes.

There will be no preparation time for the test on the day of the examination. Students **cannot** take notes into the test.

During the test, all students will be required to:

- describe the picture
- take part in a conversation based on the picture.

Students aiming at grade C or above will be required to:

- give a personal interpretation of the scene
- express opinions
- respond imaginatively to the picture
- discuss issues arising from the content of the picture.

Section B: Two conversations

Maximum 6 minutes.

Total of 40 marks (20 marks for each conversation).

Students will take part in conversations with the interviewer on **two** separate topic areas. These topic areas will be different from the topic area chosen by the student for Section A. Section B will last up to a maximum of **6** minutes, with approximately three minutes for each conversation.

Throughout Section B, the interviewer should encourage genuine interaction by adopting a question and answer format. The interviewer should ask questions which are clear, precise and varied, to ensure that individual students demonstrate their potential. To ensure that students are given the opportunity

to demonstrate their linguistic skills at the appropriate level, guidance on the types of questions to be asked are available in the *Sample Assessment Materials* document for each language, available on our website. These sample questions show how a conversation may be developed. The questions are not prescriptive, and should not be asked in a pre-arranged order. The aim is to engage in a spontaneous and authentic conversation.

In both conversations in Section B, interviewers will be free to develop any area within their chosen topic. For example, a student asked to speak on the *Education and employment* topic could focus on one sub-topic, such as *childhood*.

The conversations must not be rehearsed before the test.

Conversation 1

The first conversation will be based on a topic area or sub-topic area, chosen by the centre-appointed interviewer, from below.

The first conversation must be chosen from a different topic area from that chosen by the student in Section A of the test.

In order to achieve grade C and above, students will be expected to express opinions and use past, present and future tenses.

Conversation 2

The second conversation will also be based on a topic area or sub-topic area, chosen by the interviewer, from A–E below.

The second conversation must be from a different topic area from that chosen by the student in Section A of the test, and also different from that chosen by the interviewer in Conversation 1, Section B, of the test.

As in the first conversation, in order to achieve grade C and above students will be expected to express opinions and use past, present and future tenses.

Assessment Arrangements

All speaking tests will be recorded on a date chosen by the centre within a period specified annually by Edexcel. The speaking tests may be completed at any time from mid-March up to and including the date of the written examinations.

The tests will be externally marked by Edexcel.

The test will be conducted by the interviewer. This will normally be a teacher of the target language from the centre, but could also be someone from outside the centre.

Recordings and audiotape cover sheets (which give the students' details and the topics covered in each speaking test) must be despatched directly to the Edexcel examiner on the day on which the tests are conducted.

More detailed instructions for the conduct of the speaking test are available in *Appendix 4 – Instructions for the conduct of examinations (Paper 3)*.

Reporting of Paper 3

Paper 3 will be graded A* to G, and will be reported separately on the certificate.

Centres should note that:

- the speaking test **cannot** be taken as a separate qualification. It can be taken only with the IGCSE in French
- achievement in the speaking test will not affect the grade awarded on Paper 1 and Paper 2
- a student must achieve at least grade G on Paper 1 and Paper 2 in order to be awarded a grade for the speaking test
- a student who achieves at least grade G on Paper 1 and Paper 2 but who is awarded 'Ungraded' on Paper 3 will not have the Paper 3 grade reported
- there will be an additional fee for each student entered for the speaking test.

Topic Content

The examinations will mainly cover everyday situations which a visitor to France might face while interacting with French people. Most questions will be set in French, and this will be reflected in the assignments you will find in the Oxford Open Learning course. You are expected to be able to talk about yourself and to state your preferences and opinions.

Edexcel provides a list of topics (grouped under the title 'Themes and Topics') which may appear in any examination. You'll see from the list below that practically *all* the 'everyday' topics of conversation that you can think of might arise in your examination. There are also some more abstract topics, such as 'The environment'. The material in this course covers a lot of these topics, but, as we mentioned earlier, extra exposure to French (on your own active initiative) will further help you to cover *all* likely eventualities. Refer to the syllabus if you want to make sure you have covered all the topics in detail. If you or your tutor still feel you are 'thin' on any topic area, your tutor may well have further suggestions on resources for reading/listening, or otherwise, to boost and strengthen your knowledge, skills and confidence.

Edexcel Themes and Topics

All questions will be set in the context of the following topic areas and sub-topic areas. These will enable students and teachers to focus on appropriate vocabulary.

Topic areas

Sub-topic areas

Topic area A

- Home and abroad
- Life in the town and rural life
- Weather and climate
- Travel, transport and directions
- Holidays and tourist information
- Services (*e.g.* telephone, bank, post office)
- Customs and religion
- Everyday French-speaking life, traditions and communities

Topic area B

- Education and employment
- Childhood
- School life and routine
- Work/careers
- Future plans

Topic area C

- House, home and daily routine
- Types of home
- Information about self, family and friends
- Helping around the house
- Food and drinks

Topic area D

- The modern world and the environment
- Current affairs and social issues
- Environmental issues
- The media (TV, film, radio, newspapers)
- Information and communication technology (internet, mobile phones, email)

Topic area E

- Social activities, fitness and health
- Special occasions

- Hobbies, interests, sports and exercise
- Shopping and money matters
- Accidents, injuries, common ailments and health issues

Study Tips

Use of Bilingual Dictionary

Dictionaries cannot be used in the examination. This should not stop you, however, from learning how to use one efficiently. A bilingual dictionary is undoubtedly a valuable tool when used carefully, and can aid comprehension and improve accuracy.

To get the best out of your dictionary, you must start to use it straightaway. Familiarise yourself with its entry system and various abbreviations. Look through the whole dictionary to see what information it offers: it may have a useful grammatical section, for example. Remember to double-check new words in both French and English sections of the dictionary to get a better understanding of the word and its uses.

Quite often, even what seem obvious words may not match one-for-one across two languages. You might for instance know, or discover, that *un jeu* = a game (as in *Les Jeux Olympiques*). So far, so good; and you might then not unfairly assume *un jeu de cartes* to mean ‘a game of cards’. But French also uses this very phrase for a ‘hand’ (*ie* one game’s worth of tokens held by each player), and indeed a complete set or ‘pack’ ~ a related concept, of course, but distinctly not the selfsame thing. French also has two distinct words for different styles of ‘knowing’, yet only one verb to cover what English distinguishes between ‘wearing’ and ‘carrying’.

A lot of the time, of course, matters are much safer and more manageable than this; *un train* = ‘a train’, for instance. But then again, while *le pain* = ‘bread’, for French people this will perhaps conjure up a rather different shape, texture and taste. Meanwhile, English expresses ‘clockwise’ in 9 letters where French takes 7 words (arguably, even 8). Even the French word for ‘short’ (*court*) is longer than their word for ‘long’ (*long*), which on the face of it makes each language look equally silly ... !

Don’t let these particular examples bother you unduly at this stage; they are simply offered to open up some of the issues which two-way checking, in a good dictionary pitched at a level that you’re comfortable with, will help you tackle more confidently. You may also find that you are the kind of language learner who enjoys absorbing that kind of quirk; that such words stick in the mind precisely because they’re odd or interesting for some reason; or perhaps that you pick up other words that happen to draw your eye while you are hunting for something else altogether in your dictionary. Either way you will be enlarging and enriching your language knowledge, and you never know when such discoveries might come in useful!

What sort of dictionary should you buy? A pocket dictionary may be useful when travelling, but for studying purposes you will need a good medium-sized bilingual dictionary. If you're thinking of taking your studies further than IGCSE, consider purchasing the large Collins/Robert dictionary, which is recommended to 'A' level and university language students.

Vocabulary Book and word-learning strategies

A good way of improving your French vocabulary is also to keep your own vocabulary book. In this book you should write any new words or phrases that you come across, together with their English translations. The action of writing down the vocabulary should help you to remember it, and your vocabulary book will prove a valuable revision aid.

You should rule or fold neatly down the middle of each page so that the French words go on one side and the English down the other ~ always the same way round, whichever way you prefer. You can then cover up the English column periodically and see how many of the words you now recognise; and then test yourself the other way, into the target language.

Meanwhile both we and the exam board offer a full core vocabulary list. This appears in the target language only ~ so that you can fill in meanings yourself as you meet and recognise the words, rather than us 'spoon-feeding' you every single word (when in any case, a precise shade of meaning may vary depending on the context in which it crops up). There are also specific vocabulary lists attached to reading pieces and other tasks throughout the course. Rest assured that you will not be short of support in this frontline aspect of your language learning!

Somebody once likened language-learning to the process of making an omelette; you begin with a panful of swirly material that can't be gripped and has little nutritional value. But as the heat comes up and goes on, bits and strands in it begin to harden. Perhaps you make your omelettes by 'combing' all the solid stuff together into the middle of the pan, so that what remains fluid trickles into a thin layer round the edge and cooks more quickly; or maybe you leave the whole thing flat to cook right across, but perhaps toss in a bit of interesting seasoning while that happens ~ herbs, diced pepper or mushroom, whatever. Either way you end up with a worthwhile, nutritious, flavoursome dish.

Learning a language can be like that: it may swirl awkwardly around you to begin with, and you may then tend it scrupulously or to some extent it may just come together of its own accord through exposure and absorption. It may well benefit from you adding or building-in interesting finds (like the seasoning; in this case, words or turns of phrase that you happen to come across and find worth remembering/including). Different people achieve it in different ways and styles!

Communication Strategies

Edexcel suggests a number of ‘communication strategies’ you can use in order to complement your core knowledge of French. They are explained in full in Section 7.4 of the syllabus (and in the student guide). The basic idea of ‘communication strategies’ is to use all available information to aid understanding and communication. Clues can be found from the context, grammar and the formation and patterns of words.

Even if you learn all the vocabulary and linguistic structures laid down by the syllabus, there will still be unfamiliar language in the examinations, as they contain a great deal of authentic material. You will have to ignore some words and move on, swiftly dealing with others with the communication strategies. In this way you will be in a much better position to tackle all sorts of genuine French material, not only in the examination but in real life too! The overall emphasis of the syllabus is on *communicating* at all times even when the perfect word escapes you.

The relevance of these communication strategies to the skills required by each part of the examination will be discussed in the introduction to each module.

A Final Word...

Finally, we hope that passing IGCSE is not your only motive for studying this course. Learning French should be fun! The more contact you have with French people and the French language, the more you should enjoy it. The tests set by the syllabus are not useless skills – they are all relevant to the challenges you would face if you were to travel or live in France. France is a beautiful country and French people are very friendly – with luck this course will help you to find this out for yourself.

Good luck, or *bonne chance!*

ALISON FISHER
Additional material: IAN MILES

Copyright © Oxford Open Learning, 2009

