

2004 – 2005

HOW TO SOUND MORE FRENCH!

French requires greater effort of articulation, much clearer vowel sounds, and many of its consonants are formed differently from English. Stress and intonation patterns are also different.

These words are used in French and English. Try saying them and comparing their pronunciation and sound:

| | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| château | Hippopotamus | extra |
| telephone/téléphone | Bill Clinton | Mercedes, Ford |
| Toulouse | Elizabeth/Elisabeth | café |

STRESS PATTERNS AND INTONATION

WORD STRESS

In English we tend to stress towards the beginning of a word. In French we tend to stress towards the end of a word.

| | | | |
|-----------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Compare : | English/ <i>anglais</i> | college/ <i>collège</i> | Paris/ <i>Paris</i> |
| | music/ <i>musique</i> | telephone/ <i>téléphone</i> | mountain/ <i>montagne</i> |

It's difficult for everybody/*C'est difficile pour tout le monde*

I often go to the cinema/*Je vais souvent au cinéma*

He went to a restaurant to celebrate his birthday/
Il est allé au restaurant pour fêter son anniversaire

I really like chocolate biscuits/*J'aime beaucoup les petits gâteaux au chocolat*

INTONATION

In English we tend to have a falling intonation at the end of a breath group :

I always say/*that it's very important/to work on/intonation*

In French we tend to have a rising intonation at the end of a breath group within a phrase, and a falling intonation right at the end :

Je dis toujours/qu'il est très important/de travailler/l'intonation

PRONUNCIATION

SOME KEY FEATURES CONSONANTS

1 Most final consonants are not pronounced!

Try :

sport
vous devez

juillet
bon

nous jouons
excellent

Hear the difference between :

droit/droite
blanc/blanche

pris/prise
grand/grande

français/française
mignon/mignonne

But note the final consonants are sounded in:

bus

tennis

2 l English : like, lake, leaf//well, bottle, Paul

French : *le, lieu, lycée, Lille, elle, ville*

3 r English : rabbit, very, great

French : *rouge, varié, grand*

4 t tea/*thé*
to/*tout*

tray/*très*
telly/*télé*

tower/*tour*
tree/*tri*

5 -tion, -tie, -tiel, -tial, -tien, -cial etc

There is no 'sh' sound for these combinations of letters in French. They are pronounced like an 's'

Try :

| | | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| <i>nation</i> | <i>diplomatie</i> | <i>essentiel</i> | <i>commercial</i> |
| <i>éducation</i> | <i>acrobatie</i> | <i>partiel</i> | <i>spécial</i> |
| <i>équitation</i> | <i>suprématie</i> | <i>potentiel</i> | <i>racial</i> |
| <i>population</i> | <i>méritocratie</i> | <i>martial</i> | <i>officiel</i> |
| <i>natation</i> | <i>démocratie</i> | <i>martien</i> | |
| <i>ration</i> | | <i>partial</i> | |
| <i>création</i> | | <i>potentialiser</i> | |
| <i>réaction</i> | | | |

6 - s - is a z sound; - ss - is a s sound

Compare:

| | |
|--------|---------|
| poison | poisson |
| désert | dessert |
| base | basse |
| lise | lisse |

7 h : aspirated or not? You just have to learn these as you go along!

Aspirated, so the h acts like a consonant:

*halles
*hibou
*hockey
*hamster
*haricots
*haine
*hachis
*hâte

Not aspirated, so the h is like a vowel:

hôpital
homme
heure
s'habiller
habitant
hippocampe
hésitation
hexagone

In the dictionary you may see * or ' to signal aspiration.

8 c/ç; g/ge

Remember *ciel* and *adolphus*!

VOWELS

1 No diphthongs in French! Practise comparing the vowels: a e i o u

2 Make the [i] sound very clear: *idée, identifier, il, idiot, idyllique, compris, Paris, magique*

3 Make a clear distinction between [y] and [u]

| [y] | [u] |
|-----|------|
| tu | tout |
| pu | poux |
| vu | vous |
| lu | loup |
| bu | bout |
| du | doux |
| su | sous |
| eu | ou |
| fut | fou |
| rue | roux |

4 Nasal vowels

| [ɛ̃] | [ɑ̃] | [ɔ̃] | [œ̃] |
|------|------|------|---------|
| bain | banc | bon | brun |
| hein | an | ont | un |
| lin | lent | long | lundi |
| pin | paon | pont | emprunt |
| vin | vent | vont | |
| fin | faon | font | parfum |

Don't pronounce m/n after nasal vowels:

| | | |
|------------|----------|-----------|
| clémentine | montagne | emprunter |
| remplacer | jambon | grandeur |

FRENCH TIPS 2

TEMPS/FOIS?

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Le temps <i>Quel temps fait-il?</i> <i>Le temps passe vite</i> <i>J'ai mis beaucoup de temps à le faire</i> <i>De temps en temps, de temps à autre</i> <i>En temps de paix, en temps de guerre</i></p> | <p>La fois <i>Une fois, deux fois, trois fois</i> <i>La première fois</i> <i>Il était une fois...</i> <i>Deux fois deux font quatre</i> <i>Trois fois rien</i></p> |
|--|---|

- 1 How many times have you seen this film?
- 2 How long does it take to get to London from here?
- 3 I've been to France several times
- 4 We go to the cinema twice a month
- 5 He talks all the time
- 6 I met them for the first time not long ago
- 7 We haven't got enough time

NB! I've had a nice time

NB! What time is it?

BEAUCOUP

Remember : '*beaucoup de*' unless you mean 'the'

I've spent a lot of money

J'ai dépensé beaucoup d'argent

I've spent a lot of **the** money I was given for my birthday

*J'ai dépensé beaucoup **de** l'argent qu'on m'a offert pour mon anniversaire*

- 1 He knows lots of people
- 2 She's eaten a lot of the cheese which I bought this morning
- 3 We've invited lots of friends
- 4 Have you spent a lot of time in France?
- 5 They've got a lot of problems

TO HELP YOU TO GUESS THE MEANING OF A WORD

A **circumflex** on a vowel may be represented by an **s** in English
forêt, honnête, intérêt, tempête, hôtel, mât

é or **es** may be represented by an **s** in English
espace, éponge, étable, étoile, écrire

dé can be **dis** in English
décourager, dégoûter, déplaire, déguisé

gu can be **w** in English
Guillaume, guichet, guerre, guêpe, guimpe, guindeau

-eau can be **-el/-le** in English
château, chameau, vaisseau, manteau, musée, chapiteau, morceau

FRENCH TIPS 3

CELUI - the demonstrative pronoun

| | | |
|------|-------|--------|
| | m | f |
| sing | celui | celle |
| pl | ceux | celles |

These pronouns are not used on their own. They are used:

i) with **de**, to show ownership

*Voici la moto de mon voisin; celle de mon frère est plus puissante
Ton gâteau est délicieux, et celui de Marie est vraiment bon aussi*

ii) with **qui** or **que**, to mean the one/those which/that

*Quel livre vas-tu acheter? Celui que nous allons lire dans notre groupe de lecture
Quelles fleurs préférez-vous? Celles qui sont à 5€*

1 Which girls? The ones who are playing in front of the house.

2 I've got your phone number - can you give me Pierre's too?

3 That's my car; Claude's is black.

4 Which hotel do you recommend? The one which is opposite the station.

iii) with **-ci** and **-là** to form distinctive forms

| | | |
|------|--------------------|----------------------|
| | m | f |
| sing | celui-ci, celui-là | celle-ci, celle-là |
| pl | ceux-ci, ceux-là | celles-ci, celles-là |

Nous avons deux livres sur la Bourgogne; celui-ci est en noir et blanc et celui-là est en couleurs

Il nous reste deux pommes - prends celle-ci et moi je vais prendre celle-là

You can also add **-ci** and **là** to nouns:

Je vais prendre cette valise-ci - tu peux utiliser celle-là

TOUT

| | | |
|------|------|--------|
| | m | f |
| sing | tout | toute |
| pl | tous | toutes |

This is an adjective, so will agree in number and gender with the noun it describes:

tout le monde, tout le temps

toute l'année

tous les autres

toutes les 5 minutes

There is also the pronoun **tout**, which is invariable - do not pronounce the final t unless it is followed by a vowel!

J'apprécie tout ce que tu fais

Après tout ce qu'il a dit!

Il m'a tout raconté

Ce sera tout pour aujourd'hui

Tout est bien qui finit bien

Tous and **toutes** are also pronouns; pronounce the final s on **tous** in this situation:

Ils sont tous partis. Tous?

Tout is also an adverb. Before a feminine adjective beginning with a consonant or an aspirated h, tout will become toute - the sound should guide you!

Elle est tout essoufflée, elle est tout heureuse, elle est toute jeune, elle est toute honteuse

Il est tout seul, elle est toute seule, ils sont tout seuls, elles sont toutes seules

PRONUNCIATION PRACTICE

English

French

or

or

four, for

fort

pour, pore

port, porc

more

mort

core

corps

door

dort

FRENCH TIPS 4

QUI/QUE

Qui is used for the subject

Que is used for the object

Qui est là?

Que fais-tu?

C'est le monsieur qui habite en face de chez moi.

Tu as aimé le film que tu as vu hier?

QUI EST-CE QUI? QUI EST-CE QUE? QU'EST-CE QUI? QU'EST-CE QUE?

| | | | |
|------------|---------|------------|--------|
| PERSON | SUBJECT | PERSON | OBJECT |
| qui est-ce | qui? | qui est-ce | que? |

| | | | |
|-----------|---------|-----------|--------|
| THING | SUBJECT | THING | OBJECT |
| qu'est-ce | qui? | qu'est-ce | que? |

Qui est-ce qui habite dans cette maison?

Qui est-ce que tu as rencontré en ville?

Qu'est-ce qui vous a plu le plus à Paris?

Qu'est-ce que vous avez fait hier soir?

- 1 What did you buy at the baker's?
- 2 Who told you that?
- 3 Who have they invited?
- 4 What prevented you from arriving on time?

DEPUIS

Use depuis with the present or the imperfect to mean 'have been doing' and 'had been doing'. Also for the idea of 'have been... and still am', 'had been... and still was'

J'habite à Bristol depuis neuf ans.

J'attendais depuis vingt minutes quand le bus est arrivé.

- 1 We've been learning French for ten years.
- 2 He had been talking for half an hour when someone interrupted him.
- 3 She has been a member of the French Circle for two months.
- 4 How long had you been ill before you went to see the doctor?

PRONUNCIATION

| | |
|--------|----------------|
| [w] | [ɥ] |
| Louis | lui |
| oui | puits, puis |
| voir | nuit |
| boire | bruit |
| croire | cuire, cuisine |

| | | |
|-------|-------|---------|
| [ɛ̃] | [ɔ̃] | [ɑ̃] |
| bain | bon | banc |
| daim | don | dent |
| rein | rond | rang |
| thym | ton | temps |
| sein | son | sang |
| vin | vont | vent |
| train | tronc | tranche |
| lin | long | lent |

FRENCH TIPS 5

Pronunciation practice: What to do with i + n/nn and i + m/mm

Remember not to pronounce the 'n' or 'm' after the nasal vowel in the first two columns!

| [ɛ̃] | | [i] | |
|--------------|-------------|----------------|-----------------|
| inquiéter | injuste | immoralité | immense |
| installer | intense | imiter | immeuble |
| interminable | impact | imaginaire | immédiatement |
| inspecteur | imparfait | immédiat | immatriculation |
| insuffisant | immangeable | immémorial | immigration |
| intoxiqué | impasse | immerger | imminent |
| impossible | impatient | immobilisation | immobile |
| invitation | impeccable | inné | immonde |
| incroyable | impertinent | immaturité | immortaliser |
| imbécile | imbuvable | immunité | immunisation |

More work on the pronunciation of 'l'

Remember that all 'l's in French are pronounced with the tongue touching the front teeth, wherever the 'l' is in the word, not like in English.

Try these:

| Initial 'l' | Middle 'l' | Final 'l' | After consonant |
|-------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
| lis | allez | c'est elle | pli |
| lui | c'est là | elle est belle | plaisir |
| lundi | tout le monde | quel zèle | blanc |
| laisse | c'était long | c'est facile | blond |
| là | prenez-les | recule | clé |
| lave | changez-la | quelle foule | clair |

Manquer

This can be a tricky verb to use, because there is one use where the construction is different from in English.

manquer + direct object = to miss eg the bus

J'ai manqué le bus ce matin.

manquer + *de* + direct object = to lack something

Il manque de compréhension.

manquer + *de* + infinitive = to fail to do something

Ne manquez pas d'y réfléchir!

manquer + *à* = to miss a person (but the other way round from in English)

Mes parents me manquent = I miss my parents. (My parents are missing to me.)

Je manque à mes parents = My parents miss me. (I am missing to my parents.)

Try these:

- 1 I miss her.
- 2 He misses us.
- 3 We miss them.
- 4 Do you miss him?
- 5 They miss you.

GESTURES

There are a lot of gestures that carry meaning in French. Here are a few - you might not want or need to use them, and it might not be appropriate anyway, but you might well observe them:

- 1 On se téléphone/On te demande au téléphone etc
- 2 Quelle barbe/C'est barbant/C'est rasoir/C'est rasant
- 3 Mon oeil!
- 4 On se tire/Barrons-nous

FRENCH TIPS 6

TEXTE À BLANCS

Fill in the gaps with one of the words in brackets.

- 1 J'ai un correspondant qui habite (à la/dans/en) France et un autre qui habite (dans/au/en) Maroc.
- 2 Ma soeur est (tombé/tombée/tombées) de son vélo hier.
- 3 Ces fleurs? Je vais (leur/les/la) donner à ma mère.
- 4 Le professeur nous a demandé de (faire/faisant/faisons) ce travail.
- 5 Elle s'est (lavé/lavée/laver) les cheveux ce matin.
- 6 Il a reçu beaucoup (d'/des/de l') argent pour son anniversaire.
- 7 En (tomber/tombais/tombant) dans l'escalier il s'est fait mal (au/à la/à sa) jambe.
- 8 Les élèves parlaient avec (leurs/leur/ses) professeurs.

FAUX AMIS

Actuellement/Actually

Actuellement means 'at the moment/right now/at present/currently'.

Nous travaillons actuellement sur les faux amis - At the moment we are working on false friends.

This adverb is formed from the adjective *actuel*, (present/current): *dans le monde actuel* - in today's world.

Going the other way, *actually*, meaning "in fact", can be translated as *en fait* or *à vrai dire*.

Actually, I've never been there - *En fait, je n'y suis jamais allé.*

In phrases like He actually admitted it!, use *carrément* - *Il l'a carrément avoué!*

When you mean exactly, use *exactement*: What actually happened? - *Qu'est-ce qui s'est passé exactement?*

PRONUNCIATION PRACTICE

Really work on the articulation of these vowel sounds!

For the [y] sound (eg in *tu*) the front of your tongue has to be raised.

For the [u] sound (eg in *vous*) it's the back of your tongue which has to be raised.

Tu y réfléchis

Tu y publies

Tu y souscris

Tu y participes

Tu y joues

Tu y réussis

Tu doutes

Tu pousses

Tu tousses

Tu bouges

Tu coupes

Tu souffres

Vous luttez

Vous butez

Vous furetez

Vous jurez

Vous hurlez

Vous publiez

J'étudie

Tu étudies

Il étudie

Elle étudie

Ils étudient

On n'étudie plus

FRENCH TIPS 7

L'ALPHABET

It can be helpful to learn letters in groups, according to their pronunciation:

| [a] | [e] | [ə] | [ɛ] | [i] | [o] | [y] |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| a | b | e | f | i | o | q |
| h | c | | l | j | | u |
| k | d | | m | x | | |
| | g | | n | y | | |
| | p | | r | | | |
| | t | | s | | | |
| | v | | z | | | |
| | w | | | | | |

MORE ON WORD AND SENTENCE STRESS

Remember that in English we tend to stress towards the beginning of a word, whereas in French we stress towards the end of a word.

English classical music is really popular/
La musique classique anglaise est vraiment populaire.

They're learning Spanish at college/
Ils apprennent l'espagnol au collège

We're going to the mountains for our holidays/
Nous allons partir à la montagne pour nos vacances.

SOME MORE PRONOUN PRACTICE

Here's the order of pronouns in a sentence again. If you have two or more of these in a sentence, they must go in this order:

me te se nous vous
le la les
lui leur
y
en

Replace the underlined words by pronouns, and put them in the right place in these phrases. Remember that you may have to make PDO agreements!

- 1 Il a vu les filles en ville.
- 2 Les enfants ont donné les fleurs à leur maman dans la cuisine.
- 3 Tu vas acheter combien de cadeaux pour tes copains?
- 4 J'ai demandé à Benoît et son frère de faire ce travail.
- 5 Elle a décidé de réserver cinq places.
- 6 Il va à Paris et moi aussi je vais aller à Paris.

DÈS/LORS

dès - from

dès aujourd'hui

dès le début

dès lors

dès que - as soon as

dès que possible

Dès qu'il est arrivé, il a commencé à travailler (Also: dès son arrivée...)

lors de - during

Lors de sa visite, elle a vu beaucoup de choses intéressantes

Lors d'une conversation avec une collègue, elle a expliqué qu'elle voulait quitter son travail

FRENCH TIPS 8

1 Dictée pour travailler l'alphabet!

- a) d)
- b) e)
- c) f)

2 Passé composé ou imparfait?

- a) It was raining when I went out.
- b) She was watching television when her friend rang.
- c) We were eating when my brother arrived.
- d) When I was small, I used to live in London.
- e) This room was tidy when we came in.
- f) I fell asleep while my teacher was talking.
- g) I'm sure my phone was in my bag this morning!
- h) My computer was not working last night.

3 Trente et un/trente-trois/trente-six

Se mettre/être sur son trente et un

Dites 'trente-trois'

Il n'y a pas trente-six façons de le faire!

Je ne peux pas faire trente-six choses à la fois!

Tous les trente-six du mois

FRENCH TIPS 9

1 Tout à l'heure

This can mean *a little while ago, a few minutes ago, recently* and also *in a little while, in a few minutes, very soon* - context is all! (Look out for the tense of the verb for a big clue.)

J'ai vu ton frère tout à l'heure
Je vais le faire tout à l'heure

Also: à tout à l'heure!

2 S'asseoir

Compare these tenses:

Il s'est assis/Elle s'est assise
Il était assis/Elle était assise
Il/elle s'asseyait → Il/Elle était en train de/sur le point de s'asseoir

The one that seems to catch people out is *He is/was sitting*. If *sitting* can be replaced by *seated*, use *être* in the appropriate tense and *assis*. If you mean the action, use the verb *s'asseoir* in its appropriate tense.

- i) He was sitting in the car, waiting for his wife
- ii) He sat down and opened his book
- iii) He was just sitting down when the cat jumped on his chair

3 Le passif - oui ou non?

Compare:
Mon frère a mangé le gâteau
Le gâteau a été mangé (par mon frère)
On a mangé le gâteau

L'immeuble a été construit en 1930
L'immeuble avait été construit avant les autres dans la rue
L'immeuble était blanc

i) The house was small

The house was pink

The house was comfortable

ii) The house was built in the 40s

The house was bought by my
brother

The house was repainted in 1995

Try some more tenses with the passive, just concentrating on the verbs:

The book was chosen by one member of the group

The next book will be chosen by someone else

The book would have been chosen by my friend, but she couldn't go that night

The book should have been chosen by her

The previous book had been chosen by the whole group

FRENCH TIPS 10 THE SUBJUNCTIVE

The subjunctive seems to fill people with dread, but it's not that bad really! It is generally linked with doubt, denial, fear, desire, uncertainty etc, but this is only a rough guide. Look out for *que* which is usually going to precede the verb in the subjunctive.

FORMATION

The stem is provided by the 3rd person plural of the present indicative. Remove the *-ent* and add the following endings:

| | |
|------------|--------------|
| <i>-e</i> | <i>-ions</i> |
| <i>-es</i> | <i>-iez</i> |
| <i>-e</i> | <i>-ent</i> |

| | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| eg. <i>donner</i> | <i>ils donnent</i> | <i>je donne</i> |
| <i>finir</i> | <i>ils finissent</i> | <i>je finisse</i> |
| <i>entendre</i> | <i>ils entendent</i> | <i>j'entende</i> |

You will see that for *donner*, the subjunctive is the same as the indicative. You do hear a difference in the other two verbs, though.

Irregular forms:

| | | | |
|--------------|-----------------|----------------|------------------|
| <i>avoir</i> | <i>j'aie</i> | <i>pouvoir</i> | <i>je puisse</i> |
| <i>aller</i> | <i>j'aille</i> | <i>savoir</i> | <i>je sache</i> |
| <i>être</i> | <i>je sois</i> | <i>valoir</i> | <i>je vaille</i> |
| <i>faire</i> | <i>je fasse</i> | | |

1 The subjunctive is required after these conjunctions:

| | | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>bien que</i> | although | <i>non que</i> | not that |
| <i>quoique</i> | | <i>pour peu que</i> | however little |
| <i>pour que</i> | in order that | <i>que... que...</i> | whether... whether... |
| <i>afin que</i> | | | |
| <i>avant que + ne</i> | before | | |
| <i>jusqu'à ce que</i> | until | | |
| <i>pourvu que</i> | provided that, if only | | |
| <i>sans que</i> | without | | |
| <i>à condition que</i> | on condition that | | |
| <i>supposé que</i> | supposing that | | |

Try these examples:

- 1 I'll give you a map so that you can find the way.
- 2 Although I'm tired, I'm going to go to the cinema tonight.
- 3 They'll wait until we arrive.

2 The subjunctive is required after *que* depending on impersonal verbs and expressions such as:

il faut que
il est nécessaire que

il est possible que
il est impossible que
il se peut que

il vaut mieux que

il est temps que

eg. *Il est temps que tu partes*
Il vaut mieux que mon père ne le sache pas

Try these:

- 1 You must take the 7.10 train if you want to arrive on time.
- 2 It's impossible that you could guess what I'm thinking.
- 3 It's no longer necessary for you to do that.

There are several other situations where the subjunctive is necessary, but these are the most common. You will find the others in any French grammar book!

Once people have learned the subjunctive, it's very tempting to try to use it all the time, but it may not always be the most elegant solution. For example, *il faut* + infinitive (with a pronoun, possibly) might be better than *il faut que* + subjunctive, eg *il faut partir maintenant/il me faut partir maintenant* rather than *il faut que je parte maintenant*.