

Interdependence of Language and Culture



Introduction

Authentic FSL learning develops linguistic fluency simultaneously with an appreciation of French as a living language. Language and culture are interdependent. French is the medium of vibrant francophone cultures both within Canada and around the world. The vision statement for FSL education in Ontario clearly values cultural literacy through the aspirations to develop students with “the knowledge, skills and perspectives they need to participate fully as citizens of Canada and in the world.” [*The Ontario Curriculum: French as a Second Language: Core French, Grades 4-8; Extended French, Grades 4-8; French Immersion, Grades 1-8, \(revised\) 2013*](#) and [*The Ontario Curriculum: French as a Second Language: Core French, Extended French and French Immersion, Grades 9-12, \(revised\) 2014*](#), hereafter referred to as the Revised 2013-2014 FSL Curricula, hereafter referred to as The Revised FSL Curriculum, 2013. (p. 6) Goal statements stress awareness “of Canadian and other cultures”, while students are to develop “an appreciation for and awareness of the interconnectedness and interdependence of the global community”. [*The Revised 2013-2014 FSL Curricula*](#) (p. 6). In order to prepare our students to become fluent global citizens, both linguistically and culturally, targeted geographic areas and cultures within **la francophonie à travers le monde** have been intentionally embedded at each grade level within the revised 2013-2014 Core French, Extended French and French Immersion curricula.

Please note: this module includes suggested Internet resources. Teachers must review their Board’s policies for acceptable use of Internet and ICT as well as preview all Internet resources before sharing them with their students.

Bringing Culture to Life in our Classroom Practice

Culture is defined as “the customary beliefs, values, social forms, and material traits of an ethnic, religious, or social group. It includes the arts, literature, lifestyles, and traditions.” [*The Revised 2013-2014 FSL Curricula, elementary*](#) (p. 314) and [*secondary*](#) (p. 380)

Large “C” Culture reflects a society at large, through its architecture, fine arts, dance, music and literature. Teachers could download images of architectural structures that best represent the Francophone culture pertinent to their grade level of study. Using the strategy of Four Corners (**les quatre coins**), students select the image/corner that best represents their concept of the culture in relation to the focus of your grade level. Canadian choices might include **les édifices du Parlement à Ottawa, la tour CN à Toronto, le Château Frontenac, un phare à l’Île du Prince Édouard, ou**

- J’ai choisi ce coin parce que _____.
- Pour moi, l’image de _____ représente la culture _____ parce que _____.
- Quand je vois l’image de _____, je pense à _____.
- L’image de _____ me fait penser à _____.

le Centre du cercle urbain à Winnipeg. Authentic conversations with elbow partners and small groups in the corners could lead to a full class sharing. Prompts to support spontaneous conversations might include:

This activity could be adapted to include images of famous paintings, authors, art forms, musicians or dancers well known within the specific culture of study.

Small “c” culture refers to what we do, think and feel. Who do we live with? How do we spend our free time? Which holidays do we celebrate? What are our family traditions? What opinions do our families have about political events? Who are our heroes? More information about culture may be found in the [Intercultural Awareness](#) module.

Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire la culture?

This prompting question could lead students to construct **Ma définition visuelle de la culture**. Students could use images and drawings - no words or phrases - to create a visual definition of what culture means to them. *En silence, utilisez les images et les dessins pour créer une définition visuelle de la culture. N'utilisez pas de mots ou de phrases. Vous avez deux minutes.* A teacher-created exemplar could be shared to model success with the task. Some examples of images might be an airplane encouraging travel, **a fleur-de-lys** representing the French language, the flag of a country, family members, a tent if camping is enjoyed, a book, specific sports equipment, a specific food, a religious icon, a musical note, a theatre to represent the performing arts, a medicine wheel or eagle feather, a specific clothing item, or a Métis sash. Student visual representations could be shared with a partner, then small group and the whole class.

Sentence starters – **les déclencheurs** – could support students to share their thinking:

A class montage could be displayed and entitled **Notre courtepoinTE culturelle**.

- J'ai dessiné une image d' _____ parce que _____.
- En considérant la culture, je pense à ...
- La culture me fait penser à _____.
- Pour moi, la culture veut dire _____.
- Pour moi, _____ est important/importante.

Challenging Stereotypes - Keeping It Current

When thinking of France, do we imagine a man wearing a beret, a red and white striped shirt, holding a baguette under his arm beneath the Eiffel Tower? For Morocco, do we envision a Bedouin riding a camel across the Sahara desert?

For Canada, do we envision a beaver, a hockey game, Tim Horton's®, **the fleur-de-lys, le Carnaval de Québec, poutine**, perhaps the railroad? How do we challenge and move beyond these cultural stereotypes to gain a deeper understanding?

How can we support students to move beyond the obvious? Many rich discussions could occur about other less stereotypical examples of culture. Are your students aware of: **La Nuit sur l'étang à Sudbury, le festival Merveilles de sable à Gatineau, la célébration annuelle du Patrimoine Métis à Oshawa, la Bataille de fleurs à Nice, la Fêtes des lumières à Lyon, le Festival National des Arts Populaires de Marrakech, ou le Festival Afroflamenco à Dakar?** As teachers of FSL, we may need to enrich our own knowledge so that we may share a greater appreciation of international French culture with our students. Lists of some current French Canadian festivals and francophone film festivals are provided in the Resources section at the end of this module.

[La Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne](#) was designed to bridge school and community participation and provide a voice for 25 000 Franco-Ontarian Secondary students. This forum provides authentic cultural learning opportunities for our secondary school students of FSL.

Music Plays a Part

Music is a visible component of many cultures and plays a role in many cultural celebrations. What styles of music reflect the francophone culture of study in question? Our repertoire of traditional French-Canadian folk songs may include **Alouette, Au clair de la lune, Un canadien errant**. Enjoying fiddle music accompanied by *les cuillères* helps us connect with French Canadian culture and understand its Celtic roots from Brittany, France. How has fiddle music remained central to today's Métis culture?

Which popular Francophone artists or groups might your intermediate or secondary students connect with? Choices may include **Alizée, Amel Bent, Daniel Bélanger, Irma, Jean Leloup, Andrea Lindsay, Mitsou, Bruno Pelletier, Paul Piché, Sans Pression, Sierra, Swing, Les Cowboys Fringants, The Lost Fingers, Malajube, The Métis Fiddle Quartet, Étienne Ricard, Simple Plan, Smadj, Zaz, ZMG II Zbatala, La bottine souriante, Le Husky, Marie-Mai, Marilou, Michel Faubert, Paul Piché et Thierry Amiel**. Video clips are often available to showcase these musicians. The study of song lyrics could help make meaning of song messages and suggest “pop” culture connections. For younger students, consider musicians such as **Gregg LeRock, Étienne,**

Juli Powers, Jacquot, Jack Grunsky, Matt Maxwell and Suzanne Pinel. Teachers must be sure to vet any text (oral or written) before sharing it with students.

The Interdependence of Language and Culture Enhances Authentic French Language Learning

“Humour is the last frontier to be crossed in the complete understanding of another culture.”

- Robert Solomon

H.B. Paksoy states that “the highest level of language competency, native fluency, is attained when the humor is understood.” We can encourage our students to achieve this sophisticated level of both language and cultural fluency. Comedy festivals exist in many areas of our world. [Festival Juste pour rire à Montréal](#) is an annual summer event that entertains over two million people with comedians from 19 countries, including 1,200 free outdoor performances. Video clips of gags could be viewed to enjoy. What makes them funny? How do they reflect the culture in Montréal? What similarities can be drawn to our culture’s sense of humour? **Teachers must be sure to vet any text (oral or written) before using sharing it with students.**

Current Events

Meaningful connections to real world situations should enhance student engagement and fluency. Authentic learning can result from access to French magazines and newspapers. These offer students “pop” culture, current world events and a variety of cultural responses to events and political issues. [Radio Canada](#), [TFO](#) and [TV5 Monde](#) produce a variety of digital French programs. A list of additional resources and publications are available through Canadian Parents for French, Francophone Cultural Resources (see Resources at the end of this module).

Information and Communication Technology

Reflect on how ICT has become an integral part of our lives. How did we exist before Internet? Have students brainstorm and create an anchor chart of vocabulary related to ICT, for example: **télécharger, un ordinateur portatif, un clavier, un téléphone intelligent, un iPad, Internet, un mot de passe, facebook, les sites web.** **View media presentations more than once.** Listen the first time and during a second viewing, students write down any new terms they hear and collectively update the list. Facilitate student conversations with elbow partners (**les partenaires de coudes**). For example, **Préférez-vous lire un texte physique ou un texte numérique? Expliquez votre choix. Que sont les avantages**

ou les désavantages de chaque forme de texte?

Ask the question **“Pouvez-vous vivre sans la technologie?”** Students could create **Mon horloge de 24 heures**, in which they highlight the ICT they use hour by hour during their day (select a school day in order to include digital learning). Students may reference co-created anchor charts for vocabulary support. Using an inside/outside circle (**le cercle intérieur/ extérieur**), students could share their responses and explain their daily experiences. Sentence prompts (**les déclencheurs**), could offer support for spontaneous conversations.

- **Oui, je peux vivre sans la technologie parce que _____.**
- **Non, je ne peux pas vivre sans la technologie parce que _____.**
- **Je préfère passer mon temps à l’extérieur pour faire _____.**
- **Pendant mon temps libre, j’aime _____.**
- **La technologie fait partie de ma vie quand je _____.**
- **Pour me reposer, j’aime _____.**
- **À l’école, la technologie nous aide à _____.**
- **Pour faire de la recherche, je _____.**
- **Pour être en contact avec mes amis/amies, j’utilise _____.**

“A pause in the wrong place, an intonation misunderstood, and a conversation went awry.” E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India*. Michael Salvatori, Registrar of the Ontario College of Teachers, shared his reflections on this quotation and “the power of language and its inextricable link to culture”. He reiterates for us the interconnectedness of acquiring an additional language and the ability to “understand the culture that the language is such an integral part of.” [Professionally Speaking, March 2014](#) (p. 11) The interdependence of language and culture is the result of a developing knowledge base in reference to our own culture and the cultures of others. It must be a vibrant component of effective FSL instruction. It enables our students to increase their understanding of themselves and others, encourages patience, and fosters open-mindedness. These critical skills are necessary to help our students become fluent social actors on a global stage and seize opportunities to enjoy life to the fullest!

Resources

Canadian Parents for French

<http://cpf.ca>

Canadian Parents for French, British Columbia & Yukon Branch. Francophone Cultural Resources

<http://bc-yk.cpf.ca/resources/french-culture>

Canadian Parents for French, Ontario Branch

<http://on.cpf.ca>

La Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne

<http://fjcf.ca/membres/federation-de-la-jeunesse-franco-ontarienne-fesfo/>

Festival Juste pour rire à Montréal

www.hahaha.com/fr

French for the Future/Le Français pour l'avenir

<http://www.french-future.org/fr/>

Ontario College of Teachers (2014). Professionally Speaking, March 2014

<http://oct-ooeo.uberflip.com/i/257113>

Ontario Ministry of Education (2013). The Ontario Curriculum: French as a Second Language: Core, Grades 4–8; Extended, Grades 4–8; Immersion, Grades 1–8, (revised)

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/fsl.html>

Ontario Ministry of Education, The Ontario Curriculum: French as a Second Language: Core French, Extended French and French Immersion, Grades 9-12, (revised) 2014

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/secondary/fsl.html>

Paksoy, H.B (1988). Elements of Humour in Central Asia. Köln, Studienverlag

Radio Canada

<http://ici.radio-canada.ca>

TFO

<http://www3.tfo.org>

TV5 Monde

<http://www.tv5.org>

Solomon, Robert C (1997). "Racist Humor: Notes Towards a Cross-Cultural Understanding."

Some Francophone Film Festivals*

Cinéfest Sudbury

<http://www.cinefest.com/fr>

Ciné franco Toronto

<http://2013.cinefranco.com/index.php/en/youth-festival>

Ciné franco Toronto

<http://2013.cinefranco.com>

Diverciné Film Festival

www.ottawafestivals.ca/blog/10-french-films-to-premiere-at-divercine-festival

Kingston Canadian Film Festival

<http://kingcanfilmfest.com/about-us>

Windsor International Film Festival

<https://www.facebook.com/WindsorInternationalFilmFestival>

Some French Performing Arts Groups***Le théâtre de dehors, Ottawa**

www.leteatrededehors.com

Mariposa in the Schools

<http://www.mariposaintheschools.ca>

Prologue for the Performing Arts

<http://www.prologue.org>

Théâtre français de Toronto

<http://theatrefrançais.com/fr>

****Please note that these are some suggestions to help teachers of FSL get started. There are many other groups and film festivals for teachers to investigate.***