

## French Podcast Transcript

Alex:

Hello and welcome to Iowa State University Foreign Language and Literature podcast. My name is Alex, and I'm a freshman in management here at Iowa State. I'm glad you're all back this week to catch some more great and exciting news about the World Language Programs at ISU. Today, I'm going to tell you about the great French program. I'm sure you already know that French is a fairly wide spoken language, but did you know that French is spoken in more than forty-five countries as an official or cultural language? And, did you know that French is the second official language of Louisiana? French is not only spoken in France and other surrounding European countries, but also in many African countries, in the Americas, as well as the Pacific. Knowing an additional language will open up many possibilities for you. Teaching is one of those. We talked to Beth Eilers, a 2005 Foreign Language and Literatures ISU alumni awardee regarding her experience learning and teaching languages.

Beth:

I think French is a good thing to have because it's more of a global language, and we're becoming a more global society, it seems like. Everybody here you know, thinks Spanish is the big one, and it is, in the United States, but French is more of a global language. I just think we're becoming smaller all the time as a world, so it's a good language to have as well. It's something that you can always have with you, nobody can take that away from you once you have it in your background, and it may help you get a job over somebody else that doesn't have a language background.

When I lived there over a summer with a family it was wonderful. It was two and a half months or so this summer, but I had a really good family that I lived with, and they were very, very very patient with me and helping me to learn French better, and just taking the time to talk to me, and listen to me. Especially the mom in the family, it was great. It was a good length of time, but I think it was just when I was getting ready to leave that I was really catching on

and then I had to go. But it did help me so much to improve my language ability, and you know, I took classes while I was there too, and that was really neat. It was just a really great experience. A semester would be more beneficial, definitely, but a summer is a great way to at least get yourself there and find out you know, if it works for you, I guess is what I'm trying to say, but a semester would be really wonderful and it would give you definitely a lot more time to catch on to the language and the slang and all that stuff too, because that's all different as well.

For someone going into teaching a foreign language, I definitely think it's a good area to get into for teaching, you tend to get students, that, especially in French, that want to be there, and you know, it's an elective class, so if they really don't want to be there then they won't be there probably. It's also challenging too, of course, like any job. If you like working with kids and teaching foreign language, I mean, it's a great job to have, you know, and I do get to use a lot of my language in class, I teach all levels, so, and it's kind of fun to see the progress, you know when you have students going from first year to like fourth or fifth year, it's kind of neat to really see how much they've progressed, you know, and to think that you're partly because of that to you know to teaching them along the way. So, it's kind of a satisfaction for your self as well.

Alex:

That was Beth Eilers who teaches at Hoover High School in Des Moines. We are working on a podcast that focuses entirely on teacher education. If you are interested in this topic make sure to catch it. In the French Language there are many silent letters, and the spelling can differ quite significantly from the pronunciation. Luckily for English speakers, the French language is Latin based, so the characters are the same ones we use in English. French is also considered one of the romance languages, like Spanish and Italian. The French spoken in Paris is considered the most formal and original form of French. As you have already learned, French is the official or cultural language of forty-five countries, and most often you will find dialects of the French language in these countries too. You must be wondering, why study

French? English and French are the two most commonly spoken languages in a number of international organizations, like the United Nations, NATO, the International Red Cross, and the European Community. French is also very useful because Canada is the U.S.'s largest trading partner. France was a great colonizing nation, and as a result, many of the nations it colonized have French as an official or widely spoken language. For example: Morocco, Algeria, St. Thomas, Haiti, Dominica, and Egypt, just to name a few. Nelle Kottman, a French Faculty member who leads the scholarship committee for Foreign Languages and Literatures directed the Iowa State Regents' study abroad program in Lyon, France, from 1990 to 2001. We talked to her about her experience teaching French at ISU.

Nelle:

I'm Nelle Kottman, and I've been in the department since 1979, and I teach primarily language courses. My interest is in proficiency and in language, and I'm also very interested in Study Abroad, since for twelve years I directed the Study Abroad program in the summer for the regents. In my generation we could study Latin as early as ninth grade, so I did, and I liked it, and that led to French. More than dialects I guess, it's, I would know more about accents that would be different, and it's from the north of Paris, or the North of France to the South of France there's a big difference, and it would be similar to the difference between somebody from Brooklyn and somebody from Alabama, and there'd be a huge difference in the way they sounded, but most people would understand someone from Brooklyn or someone from the deep south. I enjoy the richness of different accents; I think it makes the language more interesting. I like hearing somebody from Provence with their sing-song kind of musical accent, or somebody from Paris with their more clipped accent somebody from Canada with their more nasal accent. I think it's really interesting.

Lori:

Are there any misconceptions about the French language or culture, maybe stereotypes or anything?

Nelle:

That would take me a couple of days, I get very unhappy. A colleague came to visit my classroom Northern Iowa, the gentleman who wrote our first-year textbook, one of the authors, and he said and we agreed that he spent a great deal of his life defending France to Americans, and defending the U.S. to French people and I think I would have to say the same thing. There are lots of misconceptions about the French and they have a lot of misconceptions about us. Sometimes it has to do with the difference between the average American and the American government or the average French person and French policy, French government policy. So there are a lot of misconceptions. We tend to take stereotypes and assume that they're one-hundred percent true about any people or country, and they're not, and not everybody drinks wine in France and not everybody drinks wine every day or eats baguettes or wears berets or whatever you know, although there are some people who do.

Alex:

After English, French is the most commonly taught second language. It's no wonder that the French program at Iowa State is popular. Iowa State offers a major and a minor in French. There are three options when it comes to a major in French, they are; French Studies, Language and Cultures for Professions also called "L-C-P," and French for Engineering. Ask any ISU student who has studied abroad and they will tell you that the best way to polish your language skills is to submerge yourself in the culture and live with a host family. Iowa State greatly encourages students to participate in its study abroad programs. For example, there is a seven week summer program in Quebec in which you would take a few classes and participate in a family home stay. Iowa State also offers a semester program in Lyon, France, where you will have native French professors teaching your courses. The program also includes several excursions in and around Lyon. We interviewed Professor Daniel Sipe, one of the founding members of the ISU Western European Studies Program, and director of the regents' study abroad program in France to tell us about the French Study Abroad program.

Daniel:

My name is Dan Sipe, and I teach language, literature, and culture in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures here at Iowa State University, and I'm also a study abroad director. For students at ISU there are primarily three options that they usually explore. The first option, I guess we could call it the in-house option, which is a program that I co-direct with one of my colleagues, and that's the regents' study abroad program in France. The other two options are the ISEP option, which is the International Student Exchange Program, and it allows students to study in France or another Francophone country like Switzerland or Canada for a semester or the whole academic year, and they actually take classes with French Students, if their language level is high enough, and that's a popular option for students who are a little bit more advanced. The third option is the Laval option; we have a reciprocal agreement with the University of Laval in Quebec, Canada, which allows students to either attend their summer language institute or to take classes during the school year for a semester or a full year like they do in the ISEP program. The most important reason why they should go study abroad is because I guarantee it'll change their lives. Study abroad is a wonderful experience for students who want to think more globally, who want to understand other cultures, have a perspective on alterity, in other words on "otherness," what it's like to live in a foreign land encountering people that have different customs, habits, and traditions than your own is a great way to become a more global citizen, and I guarantee it'll change the way you think about the world, in a real positive way. On a more practical level, the reasons why students study abroad is because it's a really quick way to get a major and minor. For example, the regents' Study Abroad program in Lyon that I direct, students receive eight credits when they get back from that program, they usually need to take one more class and they have a minor in French. It actually makes the major minor and their language skills relevant for the future. They can actually claim a mastery of French that students who have just stayed in the classroom and studied usually don't have, and I guess the other reason, and I just touched on it is that allows students to master their subject, I mean they

really have a better grasp of France and Francophone culture in general if they've actually spent some time in the country.

Alex:

Iowa State has much to offer for students who are studying French. The French Club holds weekly conversation tables during which students meet together, on or off-campus and hang out, but only speak French. Anyone is welcome, it doesn't matter if you're just starting to learn French or if you're a native speaker, French conversational tables are every Tuesday from one to two p.m. at the Cranny Room in the lower level of the Memorial Union.

Daniel:

Thanks for tuning this week for the French podcast. We hope you enjoyed the show and picked up some interesting and informative facts. We would also like to thank all the faculty and students who helped us with the interviews and provided us with information about the program. Special thanks to professors Daniel Sipe and Nelle Kottman for the great interviews. You can listen to the full length eleven minute interview with professor Kottman at our website, [www.language.iastate.edu/podcast](http://www.language.iastate.edu/podcast). Our next episode will be featuring another language program at Iowa State, be sure to tune in to find out about all the great opportunities the Department of Foreign Language and Literatures has to offer. Thanks for listening, and be sure to tune in next time.