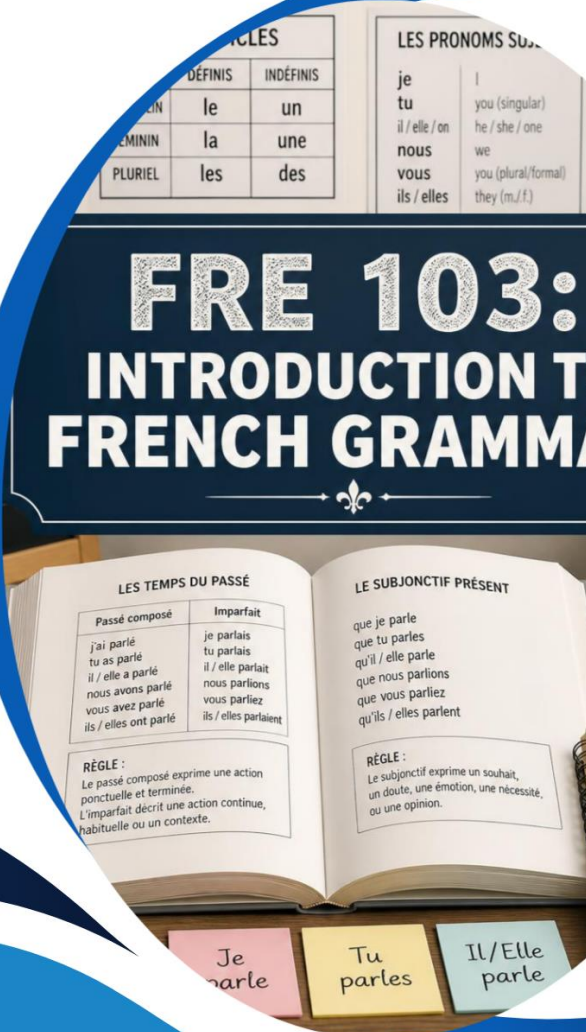


FRE 103

INTRODUCTION TO FRENCH GRAMMAR

2 UNITS

FRE 103: INTRODUCTION TO FRENCH GRAMMAR



Course video is available on our app

lanetonline.com



Series 1

Course Code: FRE 103

Course Title: Introduction to French Grammar

Course Credit load: 2 Units

List Series:

Series 1: Foundations of French Lexical Acquisition.

Series 2: Articles, Gender, and Plural Formation in French Grammar

Series 3: Verb Identification and Conjugation Across Key Tenses.

Series 4: Sentence Structures: Negative, Interrogative, and Imperative Forms.

Series 5: Interference of English and the Challenge of Faux Amis.

Parts Outline for Series 1

Part 1.1: Introduction to Lexical Acquisition

- 1.1.1 Definition and importance of lexical acquisition.
- 1.1.2 Role of vocabulary in French grammar
- 1.1.3 Strategies for building a French lexicon

Part 1.2: Categories of Words in French

- 1.2.1 Verbs and their functions
- 1.2.2 Nouns and gender distinctions
- 1.2.3 Adjectives and agreement rules
- 1.2.4 Adverbs and prepositional phrases

Part 1.3: Sentence Building with Basic Vocabulary

- 1.3.1 Constructing simple sentences in the present tense
- 1.3.2 Using acquired vocabulary in context
- 1.3.3 Common errors in lexical use and corrections

Part 1.4: Lexical Challenges in French Learning

- 1.4.1 Influence of English on French vocabulary acquisition
- 1.4.2 Identifying and avoiding *faux amis*
- 1.4.3 Practical exercises for overcoming interference

Introduction

Learning a new language often begins with words, since vocabulary forms the foundation upon which grammar and communication are built. In French, acquiring a solid lexical base is essential for



constructing meaningful sentences and for progressing to more complex grammatical structures. This Series will guide you through the process of building and organising vocabulary, helping you to appreciate how words function within the French language and how they contribute to effective communication.

The aim of this Series is to equip you with the skills to acquire, categorise, and apply French vocabulary correctly, so that you can begin to form simple sentences with confidence and accuracy.

We shall commence this Series by examining the concept of lexical acquisition and its importance in language learning. Next, we will explore the categories of words in French, including verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and prepositional phrases, and consider how they function in sentences. Following that, we will move on to constructing simple sentences using basic vocabulary, with attention to common errors and their corrections. Finally, we will conclude by addressing lexical challenges such as the influence of English and the problem of *faux amis*, while offering practical strategies to overcome these difficulties.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 1.1** define lexical acquisition and explain its importance in learning French vocabulary,
- **SLO 1.2** categorise French words into verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and prepositional phrases,
- **SLO 1.3** apply acquired vocabulary to construct simple sentences in the present tense,
- **SLO 1.4** analyse common lexical errors in French and demonstrate appropriate corrections, and
- **SLO 1.5** evaluate the influence of English on French vocabulary acquisition and identify strategies to avoid *faux amis*.

1.1 Introduction to Lexical Acquisition

1.1.1 Definition and importance of lexical acquisition

Lexical acquisition refers to the process of learning and internalising vocabulary in a language. In French, this involves recognising words, understanding their meanings, and knowing how to use them correctly in sentences. Vocabulary is the building block of communication, since without words, grammar cannot function effectively. A strong lexical base allows learners to express ideas clearly and to progress towards mastering more complex structures.

Fill in the blank: The process of learning and internalising vocabulary in a language is called _____.



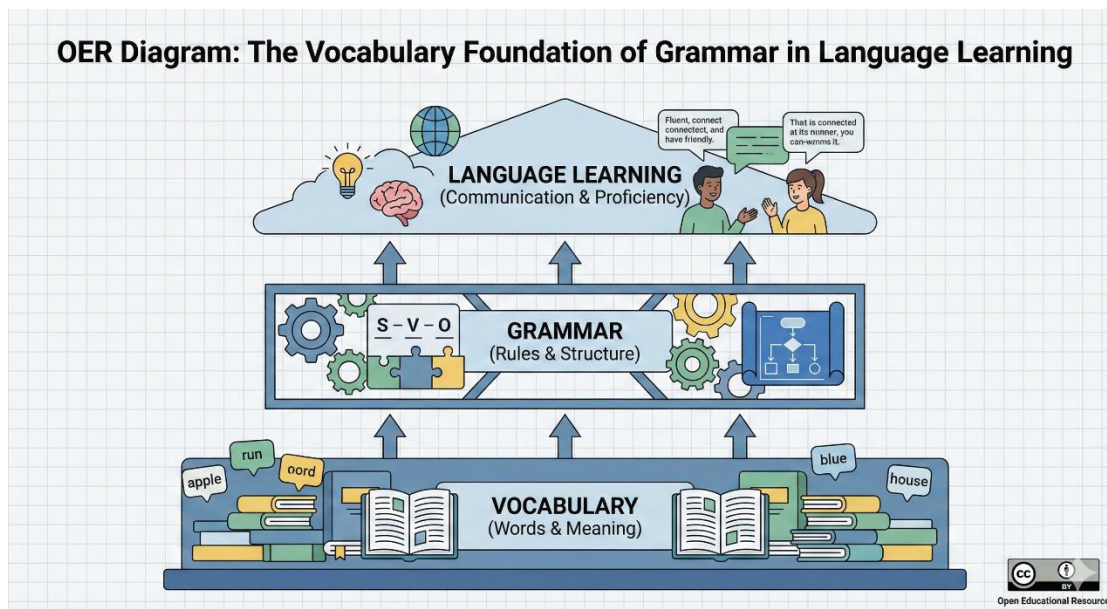


Figure 1.1: Vocabulary as the foundation of grammar.

1.1.2 Role of vocabulary in French grammar

In French, vocabulary plays a central role in shaping sentence structure. **Verbs** are action words that indicate what is happening, while **nouns** represent people, places, or things. **Adjectives** describe nouns, and **adverbs** modify verbs or adjectives. **Prepositional phrases** show relationships between words. Each of these categories contributes to the meaning and clarity of a sentence. Without adequate vocabulary, learners may struggle to form even the simplest sentences.

Fill in the blank: In French, words such as *rapide* and *lentement* are examples of _____.

Category	Example	Function
Verb	parler	Expresses action
Noun	maison	Names a thing
Adjective	grand	Describes a noun
Adverb	vite	Modifies a verb
Preposition	dans	Shows relationship

Table 1.1: Examples of French word categories.

1.1.3 Strategies for building a French lexicon



Learners can strengthen their French vocabulary through consistent practice. Strategies include reading simple texts, listening to conversations, and using flashcards to memorise words. It is also helpful to group words by category, such as verbs or adjectives, and to practise them in sentences. Another effective method is to compare French words with their English equivalents, while being cautious of *faux amis* (false friends) that look similar but differ in meaning.

Fill in the blank: Words that look similar in French and English but differ in meaning are called _____.

Strategies for Building French Vocabulary (OER Summary)

- Learn in Context:** Focus on phrases & sentences in books, music, and podcasts, not just isolated words.
- Practice Active Use:** Speak and write daily; keep a journal or talk to yourself in French.
- Use Spaced Repetition:** Regularly review digital or physical flashcards over increasing intervals.
- Create Associations:** Connect words with personal memories, visuals, or mnemonics.
- Group by Theme:** Organize vocabulary into categories like food, travel, or emotions.
- Immerse Daily:** Change device language, label household items, and consume French media.
- Include Word Details:** Always note gender (le/la), pronunciation, and example usage.

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Box 1.1: Recommended strategies for vocabulary building.

Pilot Questions 1.1

1. Lexical acquisition refers to: a) Learning grammar rules b) Learning vocabulary c) Learning pronunciation d) Learning sentence structures
2. Which of the following is an adjective in French? a) parler b) maison c) grand d) vite
3. What is the function of a prepositional phrase in French? a) To express action b) To describe a noun c) To show relationships between words d) To modify a verb
4. Which strategy is most effective for memorising vocabulary? a) Ignoring word categories b) Reading texts and using flashcards c) Avoiding sentence practice d) Relying only on translation
5. Words that look similar in French and English but differ in meaning are called: a) synonyms b) antonyms c) faux amis d) homophones

1.2 Categories of Words in French

1.2.1 Verbs and their functions



Verbs are words that express actions or states of being. In French, verbs are central to sentence construction because they indicate what is happening and when it occurs. For example, *parler* means “to speak” and *être* means “to be”. Verbs must be conjugated according to tense and subject, which makes them dynamic and essential for communication. Without verbs, sentences cannot convey actions or events.

Fill in the blank: The French word *parler* is an example of a _____.

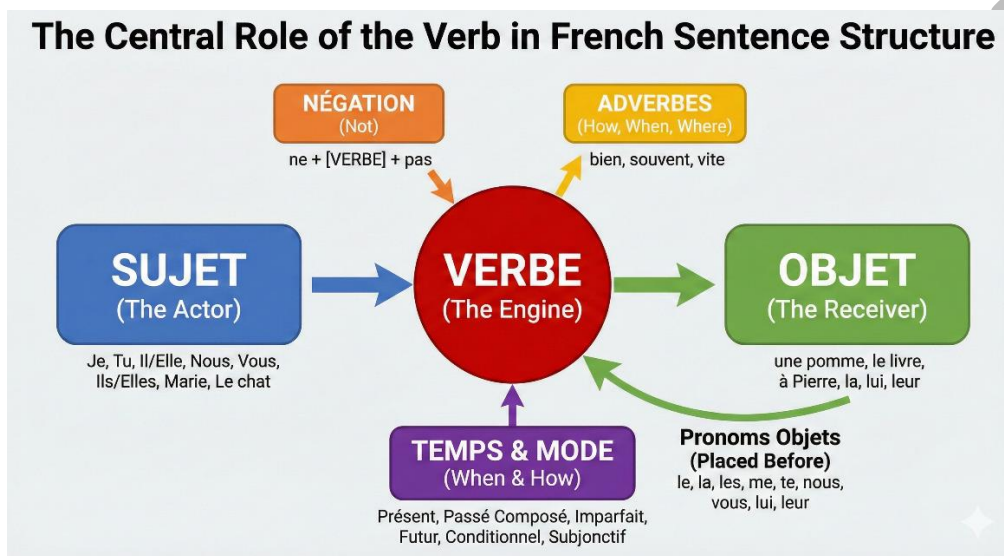


Figure 1.2: Verbs as the core of French sentences

1.2.2 Nouns and gender distinctions

Nouns are words that name people, places, things, or ideas. In French, nouns are marked by **gender**, which can be masculine or feminine. For example, *maison* (house) is feminine, while *livre* (book) is masculine. Gender affects other words in the sentence, such as articles and adjectives, which must agree with the noun. Learners often find gender distinctions challenging, but they are crucial for grammatical accuracy.

Fill in the blank: The French word *livre* is a _____ noun.

Noun	Gender	Meaning
maison	Feminine	House
livre	Masculine	Book
école	Feminine	School
garçon	Masculine	Boy

Table 1.2: Examples of French nouns with gender

1.2.3 Adjectives and agreement rules



Adjectives are words that describe nouns. In French, adjectives must agree with the gender and number of the noun they modify. For example, *grand* (big) becomes *grande* when describing a feminine noun, and *grands* when describing plural masculine nouns. This agreement ensures that sentences are grammatically correct and precise.

Fill in the blank: The adjective *grand* changes to _____ when describing a feminine noun.

SUMMARY: French Adjective Agreement Rules
(Agrees in Gender & Number with Noun)

- GENERAL RULE**
 - Adjectives must match the noun's gender (masculine/feminine) and number (singular/plural).
- FORMING THE FEMININE**
 - Regular:** Add "-e" to the masculine singular form (e.g., *grand* -> *grande*).
 - Ends in "-e":** No change (e.g., *jeune* -> *jeune*).
 - Ends in "-x":** Change to "-se" (e.g., *heureux* -> *heureuse*).
 - Ends in "-f":** Change to "-ve" (e.g., *sportif* -> *sportive*).
 - Ends in "-er":** Change to "-ère" (e.g., *premier* -> *première*).
 - Double Consonant + "-e":** Common for endings like "-el", "-en", "-on" (e.g., *bon* -> *bonne*, *ancien* -> *ancienne*).
- FORMING THE PLURAL**
 - Regular:** Add "-s" to the singular form (masculine or feminine) (e.g., *grand* -> *grands*, *grande* -> *grandes*).
 - Ends in "-s" or "-x":** No change in masculine plural (e.g., *français* -> *français*, *heureux* -> *heureux*).
 - Ends in "-al":** Change to "-aux" (e.g., *original* -> *originaux*).
 - Ends in "-eau":** Add "-x" (e.g., *nouveau* -> *nouveaux*).
- IRREGULAR ADJECTIVES (Examples)**
 - beau* (m.s.) -> *belle* (f.s.) -> *beaux* (m.pl.) -> *belles* (f.pl.)
 - nouveau* (m.s.) -> *nouvelle* (f.s.) -> *nouveaux* (m.pl.) -> *nouvelles* (f.pl.)
 - vieux* (m.s.) -> *vieille* (f.s.) -> *vieux* (m.pl.) -> *vieilles* (f.pl.)
 - (Special forms *bel*, *nouvel*, *vieil* before masculine vowel/h-muet).

NOTE: Most adjectives follow the noun, but some (BAGS: Beauty, Age, Goodness, Size) precede it.

Box 1.2: Rules of adjective agreement in French

1.2.4 Adverbs and prepositional phrases

Adverbs are words that modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs. They often describe how, when, or where an action takes place. For example, *vite* means “quickly” and *souvent* means “often”.

Prepositional phrases are groups of words beginning with a preposition, such as *dans la maison* (in the house), which show relationships between nouns and other elements in the sentence. Together, adverbs and prepositional phrases add detail and clarity to communication.

Fill in the blank: The phrase *dans la maison* is an example of a _____.

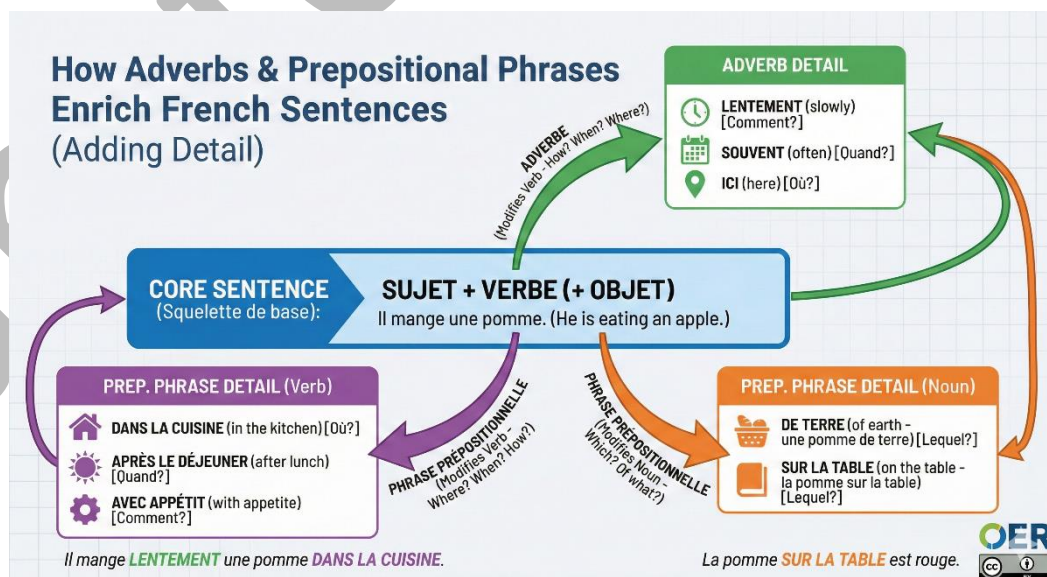


Figure 1.3: Adding detail with adverbs and prepositional phrases.

Pilot Questions 1.2

1. Which of the following is a verb in French? a) maison b) parler c) grand d) vite
2. What determines the gender of a French noun? a) Its meaning b) Its spelling c) Language convention d) The number of syllables
3. Which adjective form correctly describes a feminine singular noun? a) grand b) grande c) grands d) grandes
4. Which of the following is an adverb? a) livre b) vite c) garçon d) maison
5. The phrase *dans la maison* is classified as: a) an adjective b) a verb c) a prepositional phrase d) an adverb

1.3 Sentence Building with Basic Vocabulary

1.3.1 Constructing simple sentences in the present tense

Sentence construction is the process of arranging words to form meaningful statements. In French, simple sentences often follow the structure of **subject + verb + object**. For example, *Je parle français* means “I speak French”. The subject (*Je*) indicates who is acting, the verb (*parle*) shows the action, and the object (*français*) completes the meaning. Practising this basic structure helps learners gain confidence in forming sentences.

Fill in the blank: The French sentence *Je parle français* follows the structure _____.



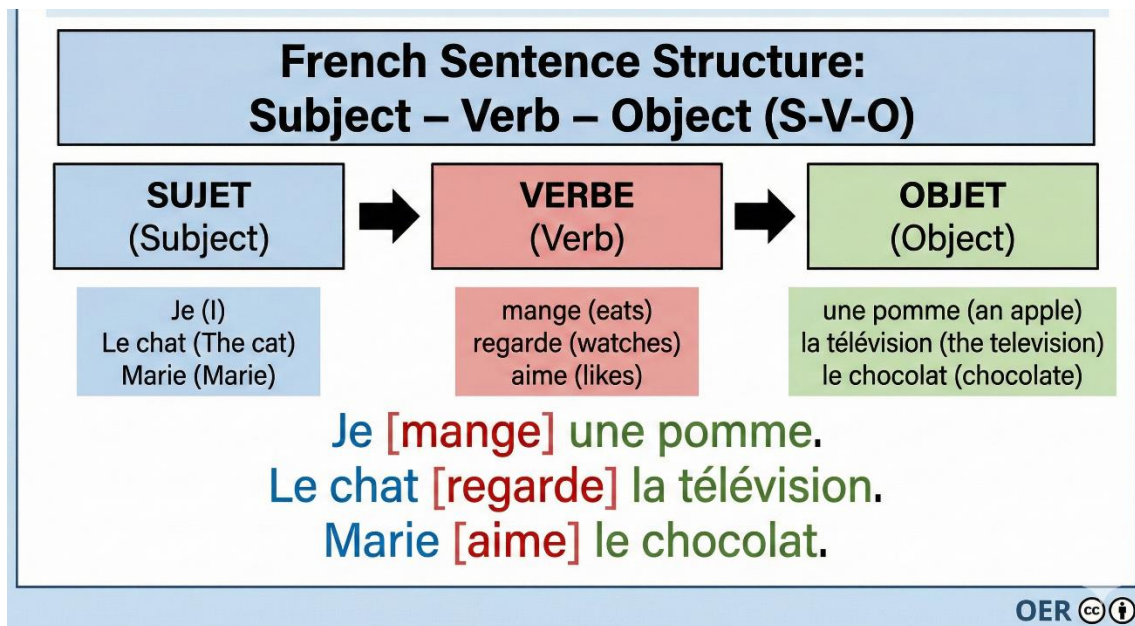


Figure 1.4: Basic French sentence structure.

1.3.2 Using acquired vocabulary in context

Vocabulary becomes useful when applied in sentences. Learners should practise inserting newly acquired words into everyday expressions. For instance, after learning the noun *maison* (house), one can form the sentence *La maison est grande* (The house is big). This practice reinforces memory and shows how words interact with grammar. Using vocabulary in context also helps learners avoid memorising words in isolation, which can limit communication skills.

Fill in the blank: The sentence *La maison est grande* demonstrates the use of a _____ in context.



Plate 1.1: Vocabulary applied in a sentence.

1.3.3 Common errors in lexical use and corrections



Learners often make mistakes when using vocabulary, such as incorrect gender agreement or misuse of verbs. For example, saying *Le maison* instead of *La maison* is incorrect because *maison* is feminine. Another common error is failing to conjugate verbs properly, such as writing *Je parler* instead of *Je parle*. Correcting these errors requires attention to detail and consistent practice.

Fill in the blank: The correct form of “the house” in French is _____.

Common French Lexical Errors & Corrections (OER)	
Incorrect (Erreur)	Correct (Correction)
mon voiture	→ ma voiture
le weekend prochain	→ le week-end prochain
beaucoup des	→ beaucoup de
le livre que j'ai besoin	→ le livre dont j'ai besoin
visiter mes parents	→ rendre visite à mes parents
c'est chaud	→ il fait chaud

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Box 1.3: Common lexical errors and corrections

Pilot Questions 1.3

- Which of the following represents the correct French sentence structure? a) verb + subject + object b) subject + verb + object c) object + subject + verb d) subject + object + verb
- The sentence *Je parle français* means: a) I am French b) I speak French c) I like French d) I study French
- Which of the following sentences correctly applies vocabulary in context? a) *Le maison est grande* b) *La maison est grande* c) *La maison est grands* d) *Le maison est grands*
- What is the error in the sentence *Je parler*? a) Wrong subject b) Wrong verb conjugation c) Wrong object d) Wrong gender agreement
- Which correction is accurate for the phrase *Elle est grand*? a) *Elle est grande* b) *Elle est grands* c) *Elle est grandes* d) *Elle est grandement*

1.4 Lexical Challenges in French Learning

1.4.1 Influence of English on French vocabulary acquisition

When learning French, many students rely on their knowledge of English to make sense of new words. While this can sometimes be helpful, it often leads to errors. **Language interference** occurs when the



structure, spelling, or meaning of English words influences how learners use French. For example, learners may incorrectly apply English sentence patterns to French, resulting in awkward or incorrect expressions. Recognising this influence is the first step towards avoiding mistakes.

Fill in the blank: When English affects how learners use French vocabulary, this is called _____.

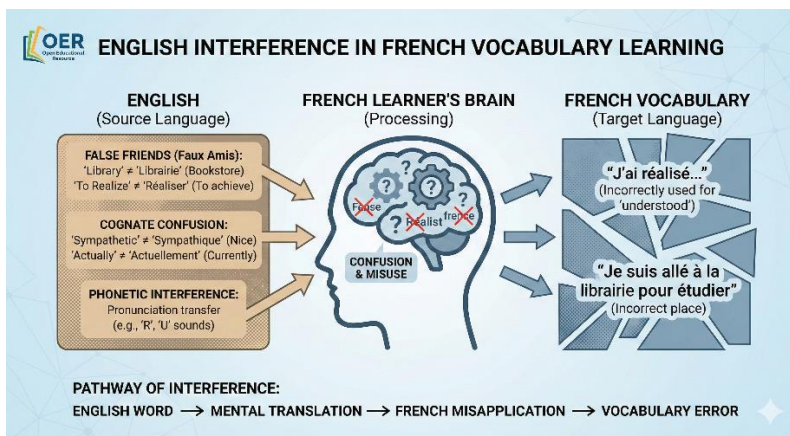


Figure 1.5: Influence of English on French vocabulary acquisition.

1.4.2 Identifying and avoiding faux amis

Faux amis are words that look similar in French and English but have different meanings. For example, *actuellement* means “currently”, not “actually”. These false friends can cause confusion and lead to incorrect usage. To avoid mistakes, learners should always check the meaning of a word in context rather than assuming it is the same as its English counterpart. Practising with examples and noting common faux amis helps learners build accuracy.

Fill in the blank: The French word *actuellement* means _____ in English.

French word	False English assumption	Correct meaning
actuellement	actually	currently
librairie	library	bookshop
collège	college	secondary school
sensible	sensible	sensitive

Table 1.3: Examples of common faux amis

1.4.3 Practical exercises for overcoming interference

Learners can overcome interference by practising French in authentic contexts. Reading French texts, listening to native speakers, and writing short sentences daily are effective strategies. It is also useful to keep a personal vocabulary journal, noting down words that are easily confused with English. By reviewing these regularly, learners can strengthen their memory and reduce errors.

Fill in the blank: Keeping a personal _____ journal helps learners avoid interference and confusion.



Practical Tips for Overcoming English Interference in French Learning (OER)

- Beware of "Faux Amis" (False Friends):** Don't assume words that look similar have the same meaning (e.g., *actuellement* means "currently", not "actually"). Always verify with a dictionary.
- Focus on Pronunciation Differences:** Practice French vowel sounds (especially nasals like *an, on, in*) and the uvular 'R' distinctly from English sounds. Mimic native speakers.
- Avoid Literal Translation:** French sentence structure often differs from English (e.g., adjective placement, object pronouns). Learn entire phrases and structures in context.
- Master Gender & Agreement:** English nouns aren't gendered. Systematically learn the gender of French nouns and ensure adjectives and articles agree in gender and number.
- Practice Active Listening & Shadowing:** Immerse yourself in French media (podcasts, movies) and repeat phrases immediately after hearing them to internalize rhythm and intonation.
- Seek Feedback from Native Speakers:** Engage in language exchange and ask for corrections on specific English-influenced errors.
- Think in French Chunks:** Move beyond word-for-word translation by learning common expressions and collocations as complete units.

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Box 1.4: Practical tips for overcoming interference.

Pilot Questions 1.4

1. What is language interference? a) When French influences English spelling b) When English affects French usage c) When French words are memorised incorrectly d) When English and French share the same meaning
2. Which of the following is a faux ami? a) maison b) parler c) actuellement d) vite
3. The French word *librairie* means: a) library b) bookshop c) college d) bookstore and library together
4. Which strategy helps learners avoid interference? a) Ignoring vocabulary journals b) Practising French in authentic contexts c) Relying only on English translations d) Avoiding French texts
5. A vocabulary journal is useful because: a) It helps memorise spelling rules b) It records confusing words and meanings c) It replaces grammar practice d) It eliminates the need for reading

Series Summary

This Series has introduced you to the foundations of French lexical acquisition, emphasising the importance of vocabulary as the basis for effective communication and grammatical accuracy. We began by defining lexical acquisition and highlighting its role in language learning, then explored the categories of words in French, including verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and prepositional phrases. Following that, we examined how to construct simple sentences using acquired vocabulary, with attention to common errors and their corrections. Finally, we addressed lexical challenges such as English interference and the problem of *faux amis*, while suggesting practical strategies to overcome them.

By working through these Parts, you should now be able to define lexical acquisition and explain its importance (SLO 1.1), categorise French words into their grammatical functions (SLO 1.2), apply vocabulary to construct simple sentences (SLO 1.3), analyse and correct common lexical errors (SLO 1.4), and evaluate the influence of English while identifying strategies to avoid *faux amis* (SLO 1.5). This Series has therefore equipped you with the essential skills to build a strong lexical foundation, preparing you for more advanced aspects of French grammar in the subsequent Series.



Glossary of Terms

- **Adjective:** A word that describes a noun, and in French must agree with the gender and number of the noun.
- **Adverb:** A word that modifies a verb, adjective, or another adverb, often indicating how, when, or where an action takes place.
- **Faux amis:** Words that look similar in French and English but have different meanings, such as *actuellement* (currently) and not “actually”.
- **Gender (of nouns):** A grammatical feature in French where nouns are classified as either masculine or feminine, affecting agreement with articles and adjectives.
- **Language interference:** The influence of one language, such as English, on the learning and use of another, such as French, often leading to errors in vocabulary or structure.
- **Lexical acquisition:** The process of learning and internalising vocabulary in a language, including recognising words, understanding their meanings, and using them correctly.
- **Noun:** A word that names a person, place, thing, or idea, and in French is marked by gender.
- **Prepositional phrase:** A group of words beginning with a preposition, such as *dans la maison* (in the house), which shows relationships between nouns and other elements in a sentence.
- **Sentence construction:** The arrangement of words to form meaningful statements, often following the subject–verb–object structure in French.
- **Verb:** A word that expresses an action or state of being, which must be conjugated according to tense and subject in French.

Concept Check Questions 1

The following questions are designed to help you consolidate your learning from **Series 1: Foundations of French Lexical Acquisition**. Each question is linked to a specific Series Learning Outcome (SLO).

Objective questions

1. (Linked to SLO 1.1) Lexical acquisition refers to: a) Learning pronunciation b) Learning vocabulary c) Learning grammar rules d) Learning sentence structures
2. (Linked to SLO 1.2) Which of the following is a prepositional phrase? a) vite b) grand c) dans la maison d) parler



3. (Linked to SLO 1.3) Which sentence correctly applies vocabulary in the present tense? a) Je parler français b) Je parle français c) Je parles français d) Je parlé français

Short-answer questions

4. (Linked to SLO 1.4) Give one example of a common lexical error in French and its correction.
5. (Linked to SLO 1.5) Explain briefly why *actuellement* is considered a faux ami.

Long-answer questions

6. (Linked to SLO 1.1 and SLO 1.2) Define lexical acquisition and analyse how verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and prepositional phrases contribute to sentence construction in French.
7. (Linked to SLO 1.4 and SLO 1.5) Evaluate the challenges posed by English interference and faux amis in French learning, and propose strategies that learners can use to overcome these difficulties.

Answers to Concept Check Questions 1

Objective questions

1. b) Learning vocabulary
2. c) dans la maison
3. b) Je parle français

Short-answer questions

4. Example: *Le maison* is incorrect because *maison* is feminine. The correct form is *La maison*.
5. *Actuellement* is considered a faux ami because it looks similar to the English word “actually” but its correct meaning is “currently”.

Long-answer questions

6. **Lexical acquisition** is the process of learning and internalising vocabulary in a language. In French, verbs express actions or states, nouns name people, places, or things and carry gender, adjectives describe nouns and must agree in gender and number, adverbs modify verbs or adjectives to add detail, and prepositional phrases show relationships between words. Together, these categories provide the essential components for constructing meaningful sentences.
7. English interference often leads learners to apply English structures or meanings incorrectly in French, such as assuming similar-looking words mean the same thing. *Faux amis* like *librairie* (bookshop, not library) or *sensible* (sensitive, not sensible) can cause confusion. To overcome these challenges, learners should practise French in authentic contexts, keep a vocabulary journal, review common faux amis regularly, and pay close attention to gender and agreement rules. These strategies help reduce errors and strengthen accuracy in vocabulary use.



Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 1]

Pilot questions 1.1

1. Learning vocabulary
2. grand
3. To show relationships between words
4. Reading texts and using flashcards
5. faux amis

Pilot questions 1.2

1. parler
2. Language convention
3. grande
4. vite
5. a prepositional phrase

Pilot questions 1.3

1. subject + verb + object
2. I speak French
3. La maison est grande
4. Wrong verb conjugation
5. Elle est grande

Pilot questions 1.4

1. When English affects French usage
2. actuellement
3. bookshop
4. Practising French in authentic contexts
5. It records confusing words and meanings



References and Attributions [Series 1]

Figures

- *Figure 1.1: Vocabulary as the foundation of grammar* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a simple diagram showing vocabulary as the foundation supporting grammar in language learning.” Suggested OER search string: “OER diagram vocabulary foundation grammar language learning.”
- *Figure 1.2: Verbs as the core of French sentences* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a diagram showing verbs at the centre of French sentence construction.” Suggested OER search string: “OER diagram French verbs sentence structure.”
- *Figure 1.3: Adding detail with adverbs and prepositional phrases* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a diagram showing how adverbs and prepositional phrases add detail to French sentences.” Suggested OER search string: “OER diagram French adverbs prepositional phrases.”
- *Figure 1.4: Basic French sentence structure* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a diagram showing subject–verb–object structure in French sentences with examples.” Suggested OER search string: “OER diagram French sentence structure subject verb object.”
- *Figure 1.5: Influence of English on French vocabulary acquisition* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a diagram showing how English interferes with French vocabulary learning.” Suggested OER search string: “OER diagram English interference French vocabulary.”

Plates

- *Plate 1.1: Vocabulary applied in a sentence* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Generate an image of a house with the French caption ‘La maison est grande’.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French vocabulary house example sentence image.”

Tables

- *Table 1.1: Examples of French word categories* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Generate a simple table showing French word categories with examples and functions.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French grammar parts of speech table.”
- *Table 1.2: Examples of French nouns with gender* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Generate a table showing French nouns with gender and meanings.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French nouns gender examples table.”
- *Table 1.3: Examples of common faux amis* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Generate a table showing French faux amis with false assumptions and correct meanings.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French faux amis examples table.”

Boxes



- *Box 1.1: Recommended strategies for vocabulary building* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a text box summarising strategies for building French vocabulary.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French vocabulary learning strategies.”
- *Box 1.2: Rules of adjective agreement in French* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a text box summarising French adjective agreement rules.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French adjective agreement rules chart.”
- *Box 1.3: Common lexical errors and corrections* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a text box listing common French lexical errors with corrections.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French grammar common errors corrections.”
- *Box 1.4: Practical tips for overcoming interference* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a text box listing practical tips for overcoming English interference in French learning.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French learning strategies avoid interference faux amis.”

General References

- Course content adapted from *FRE 103: Introduction to French Grammar (2 Units C: LH 30)* document provided.
- Suggested OER repositories for further study:
 - OER Commons (<https://www.oercommons.org>)
 - MERLOT (<https://www.merlot.org>)
 - Open Textbook Library (<https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks> (open.umn.edu in Bing))



Series 2

Course Code: FRE 103

Course Title: Introduction to French Grammar

Course Credit load: 2 Units

List Series:

Series 1: Foundations of French Lexical Acquisition.

Series 2: Articles, Gender, and Plural Formation in French Grammar

Series 3: Verb Identification and Conjugation Across Key Tenses.

Series 4: Sentence Structures: Negative, Interrogative, and Imperative Forms.

Series 5: Interference of English and the Challenge of Faux Amis.

Parts Outline for Series 2

Part 2.1: Definite and Indefinite Articles in French

2.1.1 Definition and usage of definite articles (*le, la, les*)

2.1.2 Definition and usage of indefinite articles (*un, une, des*)

2.1.3 Common errors with articles and corrections

Part 2.2: Gender Agreement in French Grammar

2.2.1 Masculine and feminine distinctions in nouns

2.2.2 Agreement of articles and adjectives with gender

2.2.3 Strategies for remembering gender rules

Part 2.3: Plural Formation in French

2.3.1 Rules for forming plurals in nouns and adjectives

2.3.2 Irregular plural forms

2.3.3 Common mistakes in plural formation

Part 2.4: Integrating Articles, Gender, and Plural in Sentences

2.4.1 Constructing sentences with correct article usage

2.4.2 Applying gender and plural rules in context

2.4.3 Practical exercises for accuracy

Introduction

Grammar in French is closely tied to the correct use of articles, gender, and plural forms. These elements may seem small at first glance, yet they are fundamental to constructing accurate sentences. Learners



often find them challenging because they differ significantly from English usage, but mastering them is essential for fluency and precision in communication.

The aim of this Series is to enable you to apply articles correctly, recognise and use gender distinctions, and form plurals accurately in French sentences. By the end of this Series, you will be able to integrate these elements confidently into your writing and speaking.

We shall commence this Series by examining definite and indefinite articles and their functions in French. Next, we will explore gender agreement, focusing on how nouns, articles, and adjectives interact. Following that, we will move on to plural formation, considering both regular and irregular forms. Finally, we will conclude by integrating articles, gender, and plural rules into complete sentences, with practical exercises to reinforce accuracy.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 2.1:** define definite and indefinite articles in French and explain their correct usage in sentences,
- **SLO 2.2:** demonstrate how gender distinctions in nouns affect agreement with articles and adjectives,
- **SLO 2.3:** apply rules for forming plurals in French nouns and adjectives, including irregular forms,
- **SLO 2.4:** construct sentences that integrate correct article usage, gender agreement, and plural formation.

2.1 Definite and Indefinite Articles In French

2.1.1 Definition and usage of definite articles (*le, la, les*)

Definite articles are words used to refer to specific nouns that are already known to the speaker and listener. In French, these are *le* (masculine singular), *la* (feminine singular), and *les* (plural for both genders). For example, *le livre* means “the book”, while *la maison* means “the house”. The choice of article depends on the gender and number of the noun.

Fill in the blank: The correct definite article for the feminine singular noun *maison* is _____.

Article	Gender/Number	Example	Meaning
le	Masculine singular	le livre	the book
la	Feminine singular	la maison	the house
les	Plural (masculine or feminine)	les enfants	the children

Table 2.1: Definite articles in French



2.1.2 Definition and usage of indefinite articles (*un, une, des*)

Indefinite articles are used when referring to non-specific nouns. In French, these are *un* (masculine singular), *une* (feminine singular), and *des* (plural for both genders). For example, *un livre* means “a book”, while *une maison* means “a house”. Indefinite articles are often used when introducing something for the first time or when the exact identity of the noun is not important.

Fill in the blank: The correct indefinite article for the masculine singular noun *livre* is _____.

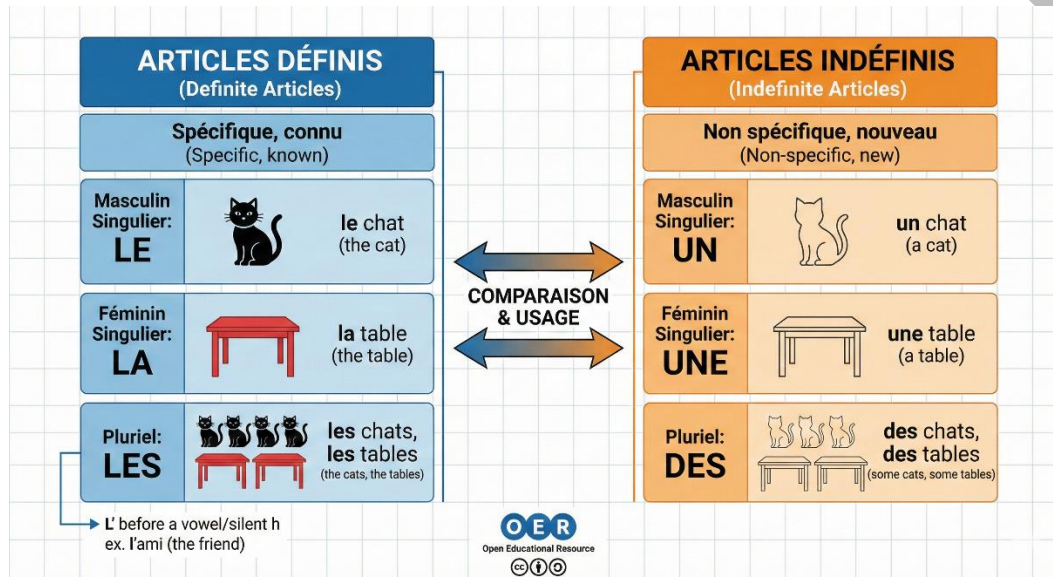


Figure 2.1: Definite vs indefinite articles.

2.1.3 Common errors with articles and corrections

Learners often confuse definite and indefinite articles, or use the wrong article for gender and number. For example, saying *le maison* instead of *la maison* is incorrect because *maison* is feminine. Another common mistake is using *des* with singular nouns, such as *des livre* instead of *des livres*. Correcting these errors requires careful attention to gender and plurality.

Fill in the blank: The correct plural form of “a book” in French is _____.



Common French Article Errors & Corrections (OER)	
✗ Incorrect (Erreur)	✓ Correct (Correction)
J'aime chocolat (I like chocolate - missing definite article for general concept)	J'aime le chocolat
Il est un professeur (He is a teacher - incorrect indefinite article with profession)	Il est professeur
Je n'ai pas des livres (I don't have any books - partitive 'des' after negative)	Je n'ai pas de livres
J'ai les livres (I have books - definite 'les' for unspecified quantity)	J'ai des livres (I have <i>some</i> books)
C'est le ami de Pierre (It's Pierre's friend - missing elision)	C'est l' ami de Pierre
J'ai acheté des bons amis (I bought good friends - 'des' before plural adjective)	J'ai acheté de bons amis

Based on Open Educational Resources for French Learners.

Box 2.1: Common article errors and corrections

Pilot Questions 2.1

- Which of the following is a definite article in French? a) un b) une c) le d) des
- Which indefinite article is used for a feminine singular noun? a) le b) une c) un d) les
- The correct article for *maison* is: a) le b) la c) un d) une
- Which of the following sentences is correct? a) le maison est grande b) une maison est grande c) des livre est grand d) un enfants jouent
- The plural form of *un livre* is: a) les livre b) des livres c) les livres d) des livre

2.2 Gender Agreement in French Grammar

2.2.1 Masculine and feminine distinctions in nouns

Gender in French grammar refers to the classification of nouns as either masculine or feminine. This distinction is not always logical, and learners must often memorise the gender of each noun. For example, *livre* (book) is masculine, while *maison* (house) is feminine. Articles and adjectives must agree with the gender of the noun they accompany.

Fill in the blank: The noun *maison* is classified as _____ in French grammar.

Noun	Gender	Meaning
livre	Masculine	Book
maison	Feminine	House



Noun	Gender	Meaning
école	Feminine	School
garçon	Masculine	Boy

Table 2.2: Examples of French nouns with gender.

2.2.2 Agreement of articles and adjectives with gender

Agreement means that articles and adjectives must match the gender and number of the noun they describe. For example, *le livre est grand* (the book is big) uses the masculine article *le* and the masculine adjective *grand*. In contrast, *la maison est grande* (the house is big) uses the feminine article *la* and the feminine adjective *grande*. This agreement ensures grammatical accuracy and clarity.

Fill in the blank: The adjective *grand* changes to _____ when describing a feminine noun.

Summary of French Gender Agreement Rules & Examples (OER Grammar)			
♂ Masculine (Masculin)		♀ Feminine (Féminin)	
General Adjective Rule: Add “-e”			
le chat noir (the black cat)	→	la chatte noire (the black cat)	
Adjectives ending in “-e”: No change			
un homme jeune (a young man)	→	une femme jeune (a young woman)	
Adjectives ending in “-x” → “-se”			
un garçon heureux (a happy boy)	→	une fille heureuse (a happy girl)	
Adjectives ending in “-f” → “-ve”			
le chien actif (the active dog)	→	la chienne active (the active dog)	
Double Consonant + “-e” (-on, -en, -el)			
un bon livre (a good book), ancien (old)	→	une bonne idée (a good idea), ancienne (old)	
Past Participle with “être”: Add “-e” for feminine subject			
Il est allé (He went)	→	Elle est allée (She went)	

*Agreement also applies to plural forms (add ‘s’).
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Box 2.2: Rules of gender agreement in French

2.2.3 Strategies for remembering gender rules

Learners often struggle with remembering the gender of nouns. One effective strategy is to always learn nouns together with their articles, such as *le livre* or *la maison*. Another method is to group nouns by gender categories and practise them regularly. Over time, repeated exposure helps learners internalise gender distinctions.

Fill in the blank: A useful strategy for remembering noun gender is to learn nouns together with their _____.



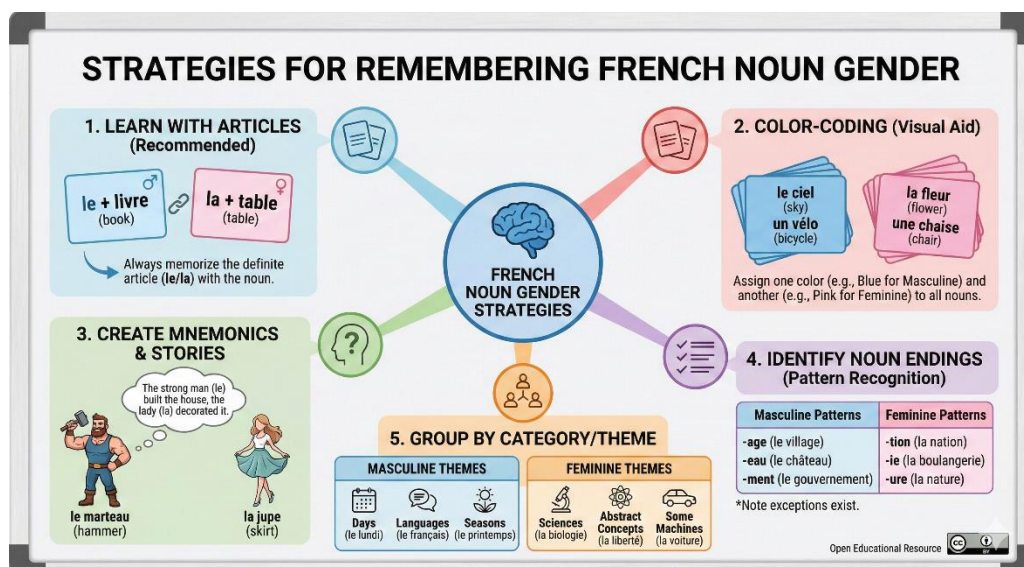


Figure 2.2: Strategies for remembering gender distinctions.

Pilot Questions 2.2

- Which of the following nouns is feminine? a) livre b) maison c) garçon d) stylo
- Which article correctly matches the noun *livre*? a) la b) le c) une d) des
- The adjective *grand* becomes *grande* when: a) describing a masculine noun b) describing a feminine noun c) describing a plural noun d) describing an adverb
- Which of the following sentences is correct? a) le maison est grand b) la maison est grande c) le livre est grande d) la livre est grand
- A recommended strategy for remembering noun gender is: a) ignoring articles b) learning nouns with their articles c) memorising only adjectives d) practising verbs instead

2.3 Plural Formation in French

2.3.1 Rules for forming plurals in nouns and adjectives

In French, most **nouns** and **adjectives** form their plural by adding **-s** to the singular form. For example, *livre* (book) becomes *livres* (books), and *grand* (big) becomes *grands* (big, plural masculine). However, the final *s* is usually silent in pronunciation. Articles also change to reflect plurality, such as *le* or *la* becoming *les*.

Fill in the blank: The plural of *livre* is _____.



Singular	Plural	Meaning
livre	livres	books
maison	maisons	houses
grand	grands	big (masc. plural)
grande	grandes	big (fem. plural)

Table 2.3: Regular plural formation in French.

2.3.2 Irregular plural forms

Not all plurals follow the simple -s rule. Some nouns and adjectives change spelling in the plural. For example, nouns ending in *-al* often change to *-aux*, such as *animal* (animal) becoming *animaux* (animals). Similarly, nouns ending in *-eau* add *-x*, such as *bateau* (boat) becoming *bateaux* (boats). These irregular forms must be memorised, as they are common in everyday French.

Fill in the blank: The plural of *animal* is _____.

French Irregular Plural Forms: Examples & Categories (OER Grammar)

1. Ends in -AL -> -AUX (Most Nouns) - un animal → des animaux (animals) - un cheval → des chevaux (horses) - un journal → des journaux (newspapers) - un hôpital → des hôpitaux (hospitals) (Exceptions add 's': un bal → des bals, un carnaval → des carnavals) 2. Ends in -AU, -EAU, -EU -> Add -X - un tuyau → des tuyaux (pipes) - un bateau → des bateaux (boats) - un château → des châteaux (castles) - un jeu → des jeux (games) (Exceptions add 's': un pneu → des pneus, un landau → des landaus) 3. Ends in -AIL -> -AUX (Specific Nouns) - un travail → des travaux (work, jobs) - un vitrail → des vitraux (stained glass) - un corail → des coraux (coral) (Most add 's': un chandail → des chandails)	3. Ends in -AIL -> -AUX (Specific Nouns) - un travail → des travaux (work, jobs) - un vitrail → des vitraux (stained glass) (Most add 's': un chandail → des chandails) 4. The 7 'OU' Nouns -> -OUX - un bijou → des bijoux (jewels) - un caillou → des cailloux (pebbles) - un chou → des choux (cabbages) - un genou → des genoux (knees) - un hibou → des hiboux (owls) - un joujou → des joujoux (toys) - un pou → des poux (lice) (Others add 's': un fou → des fous) 5. Highly Irregular - un œil → des yeux (eyes) - un ciel → des cieux (skies - formal) - Madame → Mesdames, Monsieur → Messieurs
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Box 2.3: Examples of irregular plural forms.

2.3.3 Common mistakes in plural formation

Learners often forget to add the plural ending or confuse irregular forms. For example, writing *les livre* instead of *les livres* is incorrect. Another mistake is using singular articles with plural nouns, such as *le enfants* instead of *les enfants*. Paying attention to both the noun and its article helps avoid these errors.

Fill in the blank: The correct plural form of “the children” in French is _____.



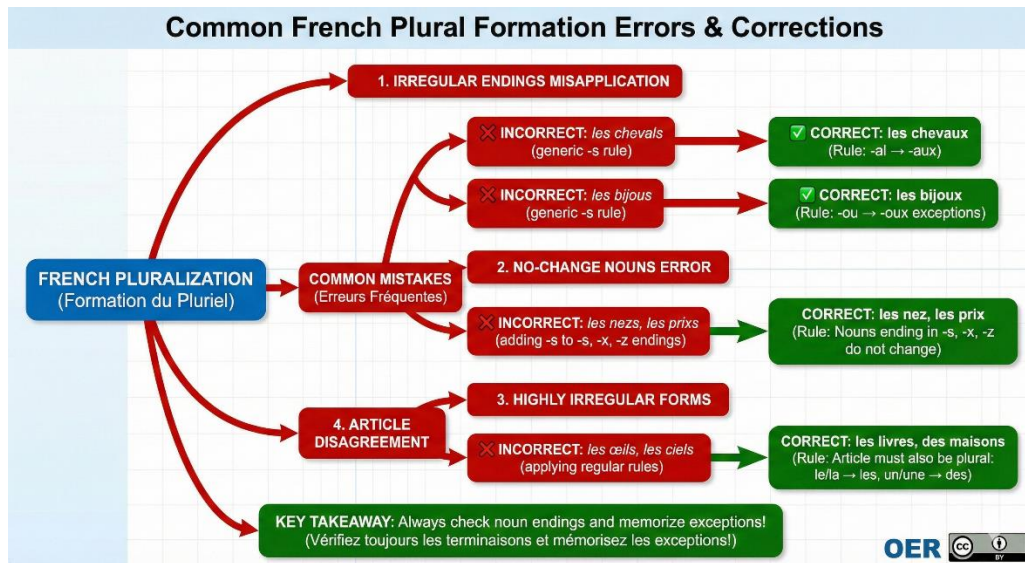


Figure 2.3: Correcting plural formation errors.

Pilot Questions 2.3

1. What is the regular rule for forming plurals in French nouns and adjectives? a) Add -es b) Add -s c) Add -x d) Change the ending
2. Which of the following is the correct plural of *maison*? a) maisons b) maisonnes c) maisonses d) maisonx
3. The plural of *animal* is: a) animals b) animaux c) animales d) animalx
4. Which of the following is an irregular plural form? a) livres b) maisons c) bateaux d) grandes
5. Which of the following sentences is correct? a) le enfants jouent b) les enfants jouent c) les enfant jouent d) le enfant jouent

2.4 Integrating Articles, Gender, And Plural in Sentences

2.4.1 Constructing sentences with correct article usage

To communicate effectively in French, it is important to use **articles** correctly with nouns. Articles indicate whether a noun is specific (*le, la, les*) or non-specific (*un, une, des*). For example, *Le livre est sur la table* (The book is on the table) uses definite articles, while *Un livre est sur une table* (A book is on a table) uses indefinite articles. Choosing the right article changes the meaning of the sentence.

Fill in the blank: The sentence *Un livre est sur une table* uses _____ articles.



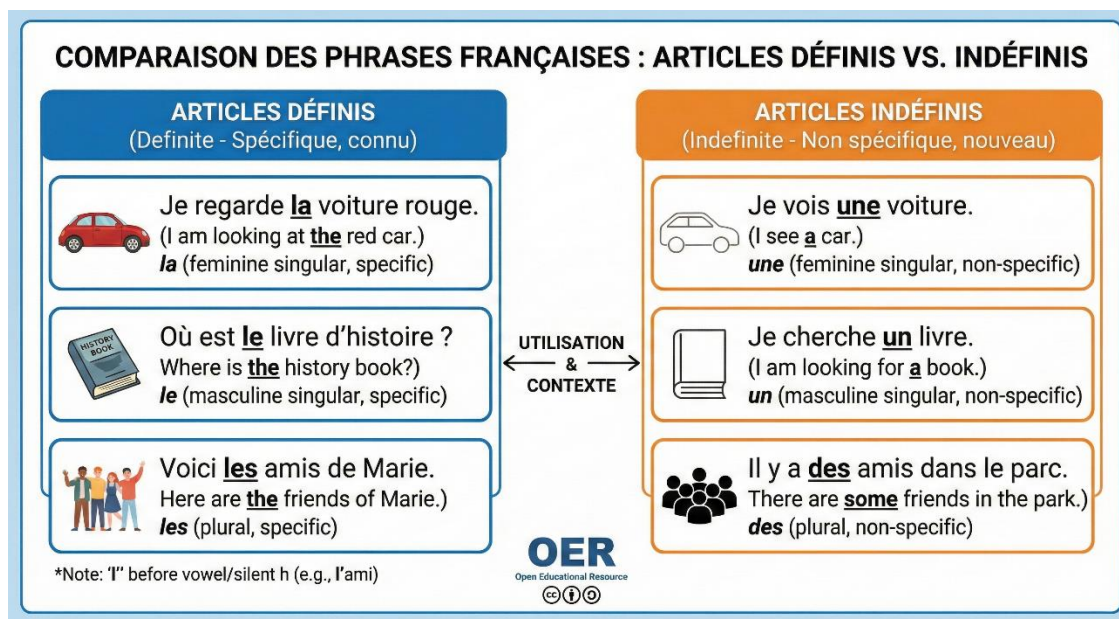


Figure 2.4: Article usage in French sentences.

2.4.2 Applying gender and plural rules in context

Gender agreement and **plural formation** must be applied consistently in sentences. For example, *La maison est grande* (The house is big) shows feminine agreement, while *Les maisons sont grandes* (The houses are big) shows both plural and feminine agreement. Articles, nouns, and adjectives must all match in gender and number to ensure grammatical accuracy.

Fill in the blank: The correct plural form of *La maison est grande* is _____.

Sentence	Explanation
Le livre est grand	Masculine singular agreement
La maison est grande	Feminine singular agreement
Les livres sont grands	Masculine plural agreement
Les maisons sont grandes	Feminine plural agreement

Table 2.4: Examples of gender and plural agreement in sentences

2.4.3 Practical exercises for accuracy

Learners can strengthen their skills by practising short sentences that combine articles, gender, and plural rules. For instance, try writing sentences such as *Un enfant joue* (A child plays), *Les enfants jouent* (The



children play), or *Une école est grande* (A school is big). Repetition and correction of mistakes help internalise these rules.

Fill in the blank: The correct plural form of *Un enfant joue* is _____.

French Grammar Practice: Article, Gender & Plural Agreement

Les petits chiens noirs jouent dans le jardin.
The little black dogs play in the garden. *Plural masculine agreement with 'chiens'*

Une belle fleur rouge est sur la table.
A beautiful red flower is on the table. *Singular feminine agreement with 'fleur'*

Des nouveaux étudiants intelligents arrivent.
Some intelligent new students arrive. *Plural masculine agreement with 'étudiants', irregular plural 'nouveaux'*

L'ancienne maison est très **grande**.
The old house is very big. *Singular feminine agreement with 'maison', article elision 'L'*



Box 2.4: Practice sentences for learners

Pilot Questions 2.4

- Which of the following sentences uses definite articles? a) Un livre est sur une table b) Le livre est sur la table c) Une maison est grande d) Des enfants jouent
- The sentence *Les maisons sont grandes* demonstrates: a) masculine singular agreement b) feminine singular agreement c) masculine plural agreement d) feminine plural agreement
- Which of the following is the correct plural form of *Un enfant joue*? a) Les enfant joue b) Les enfants jouent c) Les enfants joue d) Les enfant jouent
- Which of the following sentences is incorrect? a) Le livre est grand b) La maison est grande c) Les livre sont grands d) Les maisons sont grandes
- Practising short sentences daily helps learners: a) memorise vocabulary only b) internalise article, gender, and plural rules c) avoid learning grammar d) focus only on pronunciation

Series Summary

This Series has guided you through the essential grammar features of French articles, gender, and plural formation, all of which are fundamental for constructing accurate and meaningful sentences. We began with definite and indefinite articles, clarifying how they distinguish between specific and non-specific nouns. We then moved on to gender distinctions, showing how nouns, articles, and adjectives must agree.



Building on this, we explored plural formation, covering both regular and irregular patterns, before concluding with integrated practice that combined articles, gender, and plural rules in complete sentences.

By completing this Series, you should now be able to define and apply articles correctly (SLO 2.1), demonstrate gender agreement in nouns, articles, and adjectives (SLO 2.2), apply plural formation rules including irregular forms (SLO 2.3), and construct sentences that integrate all three elements (SLO 2.4). These outcomes ensure that you can now communicate with greater precision and confidence, strengthening your foundation for more advanced grammar topics in later Series.

Glossary of Terms

- **Agreement:** The rule in French grammar that requires articles and adjectives to match the gender and number of the noun they describe.
- **Definite article:** A word used to refer to a specific noun already known to the speaker and listener, such as *le*, *la*, or *les*.
- **Gender:** The grammatical classification of French nouns as either masculine or feminine, which affects the form of articles and adjectives.
- **Indefinite article:** A word used to refer to a non-specific noun, such as *un*, *une*, or *des*.
- **Irregular plural:** A plural form in French that does not follow the regular -s rule, such as *animal* becoming *animaux*.
- **Plural formation:** The process of changing a singular noun or adjective into its plural form, usually by adding -s or following irregular patterns.
- **Regular plural:** A plural form created by adding -s to the singular noun or adjective, such as *livre* becoming *livres*.
- **Sentence construction:** The arrangement of words in French to form meaningful statements, requiring correct use of articles, gender, and plural rules.

Concept Check Questions [Series 2]

Objective questions

1. (Linked to SLO 2.1) Which of the following is a definite article in French? a) un b) le c) une d) des
2. (Linked to SLO 2.2) The adjective *grand* changes to *grande* when: a) describing a masculine noun b) describing a feminine noun c) describing a plural noun d) describing an adverb
3. (Linked to SLO 2.3) Which of the following is the correct plural of *animal*? a) animals b) animaux c) animales d) animalx
4. (Linked to SLO 2.4) Which of the following sentences is correct? a) Le maison est grand b) La maison est grande c) Les livre sont grands d) Les maisons sont grandes



Short-answer questions

5. (Linked to SLO 2.1) Define an indefinite article and give one example in French.
6. (Linked to SLO 2.2) Provide one strategy for remembering the gender of French nouns.
7. (Linked to SLO 2.3) Write the plural form of *un livre*.
8. (Linked to SLO 2.4) Construct a sentence that correctly integrates article usage, gender agreement, and plural formation.

Long-answer questions

9. (Linked to SLO 2.1 and SLO 2.2) Explain the difference between definite and indefinite articles in French, and analyse how gender agreement affects their use in sentences.
10. (Linked to SLO 2.3 and SLO 2.4) Evaluate the challenges learners face with plural formation, especially irregular forms, and design practical strategies for applying plural rules accurately in sentences.

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 2]

Objective questions

1. b) le
2. b) describing a feminine noun
3. b) animaux
4. d) Les maisons sont grandes

Short-answer questions

5. An indefinite article refers to a non-specific noun. Examples: *un* (a, masculine), *une* (a, feminine).
6. A useful strategy is to learn nouns together with their articles, e.g. *le livre*, *la maison*.
7. *des livres*
8. Example: *Les enfants sont heureux* (The children are happy).

Long-answer questions

9. **Basic response:** Definite articles (*le*, *la*, *les*) refer to specific nouns, while indefinite articles (*un*, *une*, *des*) refer to non-specific nouns. Gender agreement requires that articles match the masculine or feminine form of the noun, e.g. *le livre* vs *la maison*.

Value-added response: Beyond the basics, learners should note that article choice also changes meaning in discourse. For instance, *un livre* introduces a new idea, while *le livre* refers back to something already mentioned. Gender agreement is not only grammatical but also cultural, as it reflects how French speakers categorise the world.



10. **Basic response:** Learners often struggle with irregular plurals such as *animal* → *animaux*. Strategies include memorising common irregular forms and practising them in sentences.

Value-added response: Outstanding learners can design exercises that combine plural rules with authentic contexts, such as reading French newspapers where irregular plurals appear frequently. They may also create flashcards or group nouns by endings (*-al*, *-eau*) to reinforce patterns, ensuring accuracy in both writing and speaking.

Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 2]

Pilot Questions 2.1

1. le
2. une
3. la
4. une maison est grande
5. des livres

Pilot Questions 2.2

1. maison
2. le
3. describing a feminine noun
4. la maison est grande
5. learning nouns with their articles

Pilot Questions 2.3

1. add -s
2. maisons
3. animaux
4. bateaux
5. les enfants jouent

Pilot Questions 2.4

1. Le livre est sur la table



2. feminine plural agreement
3. Les enfants jouent
4. Les livre sont grands
5. internalise article, gender, and plural rules

References and Attributions [Series 2]

General references

- Course content adapted from *FRE 103: Introduction to French Grammar (2 Units C: LH 30)*.
- Suggested OER repositories for further study:
 - OER Commons (<https://www.oercommons.org>)
 - MERLOT (<https://www.merlot.org>)
 - Open Textbook Library (<https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks> (open.umn.edu in Bing))

Figures

- *Figure 2.1: Definite vs indefinite articles* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a diagram comparing definite and indefinite articles in French with examples.” Suggested OER search string: “OER diagram French definite vs indefinite articles.”
- *Figure 2.2: Strategies for remembering gender distinctions* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a diagram showing strategies for remembering French noun gender, such as learning with articles.” Suggested OER search string: “OER diagram French noun gender learning strategies.”
- *Figure 2.3: Correcting plural formation errors* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a diagram showing common mistakes in French plural formation with corrections.” Suggested OER search string: “OER diagram French plural formation errors corrections.”
- *Figure 2.4: Article usage in French sentences* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a diagram showing French sentences with definite and indefinite articles side by side.” Suggested OER search string: “OER diagram French sentences definite vs indefinite articles.”

Tables

- *Table 2.1: Definite articles in French* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Generate a table showing French definite articles with examples and meanings.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French definite articles examples table.”



- *Table 2.2: Examples of French nouns with gender* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Generate a table showing French nouns with gender and meanings.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French nouns gender examples table.”
- *Table 2.3: Regular plural formation in French* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Generate a table showing regular plural formation of French nouns and adjectives.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French plural formation regular nouns adjectives table.”
- *Table 2.4: Examples of gender and plural agreement in sentences* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Generate a table showing French sentences with gender and plural agreement explained.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French sentences gender plural agreement examples.”

Boxes

- *Box 2.1: Common article errors and corrections* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a text box listing common French article errors with corrections.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French grammar article errors corrections.”
- *Box 2.2: Rules of gender agreement in French* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a text box summarising French gender agreement rules with examples.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French grammar gender agreement rules examples.”
- *Box 2.3: Examples of irregular plural forms* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a text box listing examples of irregular plural forms in French.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French irregular plural forms examples.”
- *Box 2.4: Practice sentences for learners* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a text box with practice sentences showing article, gender, and plural agreement in French.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French practice sentences articles gender plural agreement.”



Series 3

Course Code: FRE 103

Course Title: Introduction to French Grammar

Course Credit load: 2 Units

List Series:

Series 1: Foundations of French Lexical Acquisition.

Series 2: Articles, Gender, and Plural Formation in French Grammar

Series 3: Verb Identification and Conjugation Across Key Tenses.

Series 4: Sentence Structures: Negative, Interrogative, and Imperative Forms.

Series 5: Interference of English and the Challenge of Faux Amis.

Parts Outline for Series 3

Part 3.1: Identifying French Verbs

- 3.1.1 Definition and role of verbs in sentences
- 3.1.2 Recognising infinitive forms (-er, -ir, -re)
- 3.1.3 Distinguishing regular and irregular verbs

Part 3.2: Conjugation in the Present Tense

- 3.2.1 Regular -er verbs (e.g. *parler*)
- 3.2.2 Regular -ir and -re verbs
- 3.2.3 Common irregular verbs (*être, avoir, aller, faire*)

Part 3.3: Conjugation in the Past Tense (Passé Composé)

- 3.3.1 Formation with *avoir* as auxiliary
- 3.3.2 Formation with *être* as auxiliary
- 3.3.3 Agreement rules in passé composé

Part 3.4: Conjugation in the Future Tense

- 3.4.1 Simple future endings for regular verbs
- 3.4.2 Irregular stems in the future tense
- 3.4.3 Practical sentence applications

Introduction

Verbs are at the heart of French grammar, as they express actions, states, and processes. Without them, sentences cannot convey meaning effectively. For learners, identifying verbs and mastering their



conjugation across key tenses is one of the most important steps in building fluency. This Series focuses on helping you recognise verbs and use them correctly in everyday communication.

The aim of this Series is to enable you to identify French verbs, distinguish between regular and irregular forms, and conjugate them accurately in the present, past, and future tenses. By the end of this Series, you will be able to apply these conjugations confidently in sentences, ensuring that your communication is both grammatically correct and meaningful.

We shall begin by learning how to identify verbs in their infinitive forms and classify them as regular or irregular. Next, we will explore conjugation in the present tense, covering both regular patterns and common irregular verbs. We will then move on to the past tense, focusing on the *passé composé* with its auxiliary verbs and agreement rules. Finally, we will study the future tense, examining both regular endings and irregular stems, before applying all these forms in practical sentence construction.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 3.1:** define French verbs and classify them into infinitive forms (-er, -ir, -re) as regular or irregular,
- **SLO 3.2:** demonstrate how to conjugate regular and irregular verbs in the present tense,
- **SLO 3.3:** apply rules for forming the *passé composé* using *avoir* and *être* as auxiliaries, including agreement rules,
- **SLO 3.4:** construct sentences using the simple future tense with both regular endings and irregular stems.

3.1 Identifying French Verbs

3.1.1 Definition and role of verbs in sentences

Verbs are words that express actions, states, or processes. In French, verbs are central to sentence construction because they determine how subjects and objects interact. For example, in the sentence *Je parle français* (I speak French), the verb *parle* conveys the action of speaking. Without verbs, sentences cannot communicate meaning effectively.

Fill in the blank: In the sentence *Je parle français*, the verb is _____.



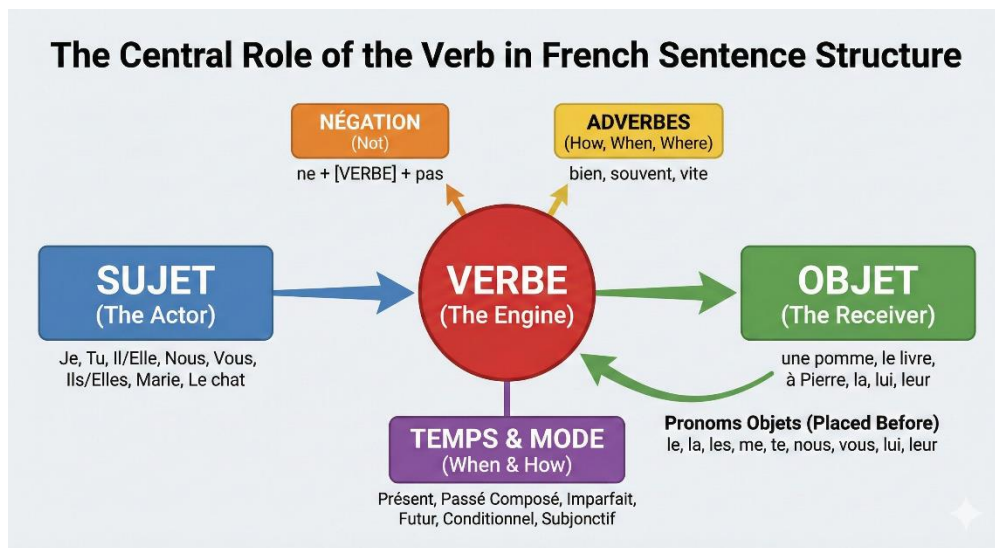


Figure 3.1: Verbs as the core of French sentences.

3.1.2 Recognising infinitive forms (-er, -ir, -re)

The **infinitive** is the base form of a verb, not yet conjugated for tense or subject. In French, infinitives typically end in *-er*, *-ir*, or *-re*. Examples include *parler* (to speak), *finir* (to finish), and *vendre* (to sell). Recognising these endings helps learners identify verbs quickly and prepare for conjugation.

Fill in the blank: The verb *finir* belongs to the _____ group of infinitives.

Ending	Example	Meaning
-er	parler	to speak
-ir	finir	to finish
-re	vendre	to sell

Table 3.1: Common French infinitive endings.

3.1.3 Distinguishing regular and irregular verbs

Regular verbs follow predictable patterns when conjugated. For example, *parler* (to speak) follows the standard *-er* conjugation rules. **Irregular verbs**, however, do not follow these patterns and must be memorised individually. Common irregular verbs include *être* (to be), *avoir* (to have), *aller* (to go), and *faire* (to do/make). Recognising whether a verb is regular or irregular is crucial for accurate conjugation.

Fill in the blank: The verb *être* is classified as _____.



French Verbs: Regular & Irregular Examples (OER)	
REGULAR VERBS (Verbes Réguliers) - Follow Patterns	IRREGULAR VERBS (Verbes Irréguliers) - Unique Patterns
-ER Group (Most Common): parler (to speak), manger (to eat), aimer (to like/love), chanter (to sing), travailler (to work). -IR Group (Regular): finir (to finish), choisir (to choose), réussir (to succeed), grandir (to grow), remplir (to fill). -RE Group (Regular): attendre (to wait), vendre (to sell), entendre (to hear), répondre (to answer), perdre (to lose). *Conjugations follow predictable rules based on ending.	Top 4 Most Common: être (to be), avoir (to have), aller (to go), faire (to make/do). Modal Verbs: pouvoir (can/to be able), vouloir (to want), devoir (must/to have to). Other Common Verbs: voir (to see), venir (to come), prendre (to take), partir (to leave), sortir (to go out), mettre (to put), savoir (to know), connaître (to know/be familiar with). *Must memorize individual conjugation patterns. OER

Box 3.1: Examples of regular and irregular verbs

Pilot Questions 3.1

- Which of the following is a verb in the sentence *Je parle français*? a) Je b) parle c) français d) none
- Which infinitive ending does the verb *vendre* belong to? a) -er b) -ir c) -re d) -oir
- Which of the following is a regular verb? a) être b) avoir c) parler d) aller
- The infinitive form of *finir* means: a) to speak b) to finish c) to sell d) to go
- Which of the following verbs is irregular? a) parler b) finir c) vendre d) faire

3.2 Conjugation in the Present Tense

3.2.1 Regular -er verbs (e.g. *parler*)

Regular verbs are verbs that follow predictable patterns when conjugated. The most common group in French is the -er verbs. For example, *parler* (to speak) is conjugated by removing -er and adding endings that correspond to the subject pronoun: *je parle, tu parles, il/elle parle, nous parlons, vous parlez, ils/elles parlent*.

Fill in the blank: The correct present tense form of *parler* for *nous* is _____.

Subject	Conjugation	Meaning
je	parle	I speak
tu	parles	you speak



Subject	Conjugation	Meaning
il/elle	parle	he/she speaks
nous	parlons	we speak
vous	parlez	you speak (formal/plural)
ils/elles	parlent	they speak

Table 3.2: Present tense conjugation of *parler*.

3.2.2 Regular -ir and -re verbs

-ir and -re verbs also follow regular patterns. For *finir* (to finish), the endings are -is, -is, -it, -issons, -issez, -issent. For *vendre* (to sell), the endings are -s, -s, -, -ons, -ez, -ent. These endings must be memorised and applied consistently.

Fill in the blank: The correct present tense form of *finir* for *ils* is _____.

Subject	finir (to finish)	vendre (to sell)
je	finis	vends
tu	finis	vends
il/elle	finit	vend
nous	finissons	vendons
vous	finissez	vendez
ils/elles	finissent	vendent

Table 3.3: Present tense conjugation of *finir* and *vendre*

3.2.3 Common irregular verbs (*être*, *avoir*, *aller*, *faire*)

Irregular verbs do not follow standard conjugation rules and must be memorised individually. Some of the most important irregular verbs are *être* (to be), *avoir* (to have), *aller* (to go), and *faire* (to do/make). These verbs are used frequently in everyday communication, so mastering them is essential.

Fill in the blank: The correct present tense form of *être* for *vous* is _____.



Présent des Verbes Irréguliers Communs (OER French)			
ÊTRE (to be)	AVOIR (to have)	ALLER (to go)	FAIRE (to make/do)
je suis	j'ai	je vais	je fais
tu es	tu as	tu vas	tu fais
il/elle/on est	il/elle/on a	il/elle/on va	il/elle/on fait
nous sommes	nous avons	nous allons	nous faisons
vous êtes	vous avez	vous allez	vous faites
ils/elles sont	ils/elles ont	ils/elles vont	ils/elles font

Box 3.2: Present tense forms of common irregular verbs.

Pilot Questions 3.2

- Which of the following is the correct present tense form of *parler* for *nous*? a) parlons b) parlez c) parlent d) parle
- The correct present tense form of *finir* for *ils* is: a) finit b) finissent c) finissons d) finis
- Which of the following is the correct present tense form of *vendre* for *vous*? a) vends b) vendons c) vendez d) vendent
- The correct present tense form of *être* for *vous* is: a) êtes b) sommes c) es d) sont
- Which of the following verbs is irregular? a) parler b) finir c) vendre d) aller

3.3 Conjugation in the Past Tense (Passé Composé)

3.3.1 Formation with *avoir* as auxiliary

The **passé composé** is the most common past tense in French, used to describe completed actions. It is formed with an **auxiliary verb** (*avoir* or *être*) plus the **past participle** of the main verb. Most verbs use *avoir*. For example, *j'ai parlé* means "I spoke". The auxiliary is conjugated in the present tense, while the past participle remains fixed.

Fill in the blank: The passé composé of *parler* with *je* is _____.

Subject	Auxiliary (<i>avoir</i>)	Past participle	Example
je	ai	parlé	j'ai parlé
tu	as	parlé	tu as parlé



Subject	Auxiliary (<i>avoir</i>)	Past participle	Example
il/elle	a	parlé	il/elle a parlé
nous	avons	parlé	nous avons parlé
vous	avez	parlé	vous avez parlé
ils/elles	ont	parlé	ils/elles ont parlé

Table 3.4: *Passé composé* with *avoir*.

3.3.2 Formation with *être* as auxiliary

Some verbs use *être* instead of *avoir* in the *passé composé*. These are mostly verbs of movement or change of state, such as *aller* (to go), *venir* (to come), *arriver* (to arrive), and *partir* (to leave). For example, *je suis allé* means “I went”. When *être* is used, the past participle must agree in gender and number with the subject.

Fill in the blank: The *passé composé* of *aller* with *elle* is _____.

Passé Composé with Être: Common Verbs & Examples (OER French)	
Verb (Infinitive) & Past Participle	Example Sentence (Agreement shown)
Devenir (devenu)	Elle est devenue médecin.
Revenir (revenu)	Ils sont revenus hier.
Monter (monté)	Je suis montée dans le bus.
Rester (resté)	Nous sommes restées à la maison.
Sortir (sorti)	Tu es sortie avec tes amis?
Venir (venu)	Il est venu seul.
Aller (allé)	Elles sont allées au cinéma.
Naître (né)	Le bébé est né ce matin.
Descendre (descendu)	Elle est descendue du train.
Entrer (entré)	Ils sont entrés dans la salle.
Rentrer (rentré)	Marie est rentrée tard.
Tomber (tombé)	Je suis tombée dans la rue.
Retourner (retourné)	Il est retourné en France.
Arriver (arrivé)	Elles sont arrivées à l'heure.
Mourir (mort)	L'écrivain est mort en 1900.
Partir (parti)	Ils sont partis en vacances.

* Remember to agree the past participle in gender and number with the subject!



Box 3.3: Common verbs using *être* in the *passé composé*

3.3.3 Agreement rules in *passé composé*

When the auxiliary *être* is used, the **past participle** must agree with the subject in gender and number. For example, *elle est allée* (she went) adds *-e* for feminine, while *ils sont allés* (they went) adds *-s* for plural. With *avoir*, agreement is generally not required unless a direct object precedes the verb.

Fill in the blank: The correct *passé composé* form of *aller* for *elles* is _____.



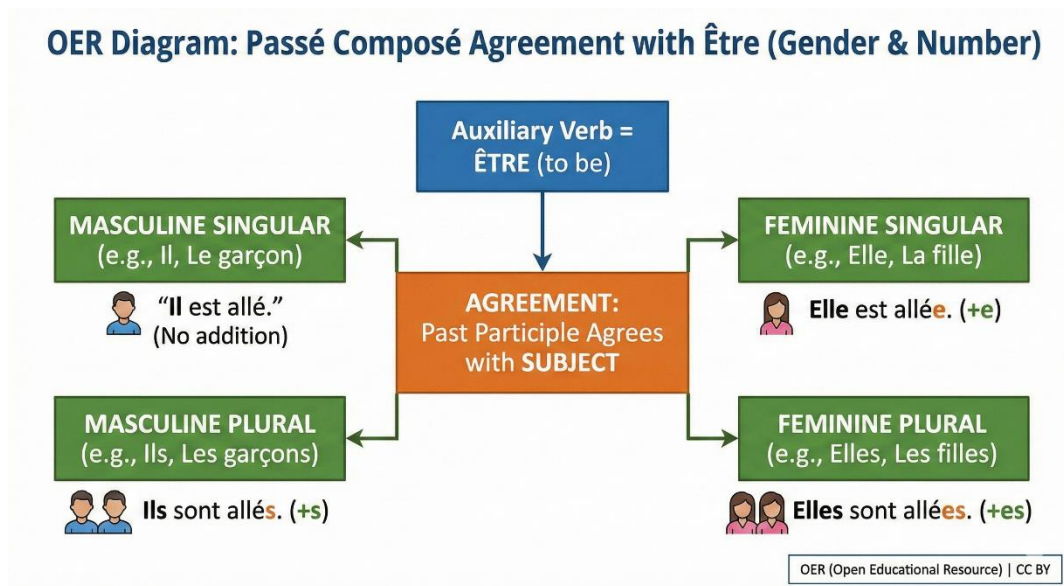


Figure 3.3: Agreement in passé composé.

Pilot Questions 3.3

- Which auxiliary verb is most commonly used in the passé composé? a) être b) avoir c) aller d) faire
- The passé composé of *parler* with *nous* is: a) nous parlons b) nous avons parlé c) nous parlions d) nous parlerons
- Which of the following verbs uses *être* in the passé composé? a) parler b) vendre c) aller d) finir
- The correct passé composé form of *aller* with *elle* is: a) elle a allé b) elle est allé c) elle est allée d) elle a allée
- Which of the following sentences shows correct agreement? a) elles sont allé b) elles sont allées c) elles ont allé d) elles ont allées

3.4 Conjugation in the Future Tense

3.4.1 Simple future endings for regular verbs

The **future tense** in French expresses actions that will happen. For regular verbs, the future tense is formed by adding specific endings to the infinitive form. For *-er* and *-ir* verbs, the endings are *-ai*, *-as*, *-a*, *-ons*, *-ez*, *-ont*. For example, *parler* (to speak) becomes *je parlerai*, *tu parleras*, *il/elle parlera*, *nous parlerons*, *vous parlerez*, *ils/elles parleront*.

Fill in the blank: The correct future tense form of *parler* for *nous* is _____.



Subject	Conjugation	Meaning
je	parlerai	I will speak
tu	parleras	you will speak
il/elle	parlera	he/she will speak
nous	parlerons	we will speak
vous	parlerez	you will speak (formal/plural)
ils/elles	parleront	they will speak

Table 3.5: Simple future conjugation of parler.

3.4.2 Irregular stems in the future tense

Some verbs use irregular stems in the future tense, though they still take the same endings. For example, *avoir* (to have) becomes *aur-*, *être* (to be) becomes *ser-*, *aller* (to go) becomes *ir-*, and *faire* (to do/make) becomes *fer-*. These irregular stems must be memorised.

Fill in the blank: The future tense stem of *être* is _____.

Common French Irregular Future Tense Stems & Examples	
Infinitive → Irregular Stem	Example (Future Tense)
avoir → aur-	J' aurai le temps demain. (I will have time tomorrow.)
être → ser-	Il sera content. (He will be happy.)
aller → ir-	Nous irons en France. (We will go to France.)
faire → fer-	Tu feras tes devoirs. (You will do your homework.)
voir → verr-	Elles verront un film. (They will see a movie.)
pouvoir → pourr-	Je pourrai venir. (I will be able to come.)
vouloir → voudr-	Vous voudrez partir. (You will want to leave.)
devoir → devr-	On devra étudier. (One will have to study.)
venir → viendr-	Ils viendront bientôt. (They will come soon.)
savoir → saur-	Elle saura la réponse. (She will know the answer.)
recevoir → recevr-	Je recevrai une lettre. (I will receive a letter.)
mourir → mourr-	Il mourra un jour. (He will die one day.)
courir → courr-	Nous courrons vite. (We will run fast.)
pleuvoir → pleuvr-	Il pleuvra demain. (It will rain tomorrow.)
falloir → faudr-	Il faudra partir. (It will be necessary to leave.)

*Note: Future endings (-ai, -as, -a, -ons, -ez, -ont) are regular for these stems. Based on Open Educational Resources.

Box 3.4: Common irregular stems in the future tense

3.4.3 Practical sentence applications

Using the future tense in sentences allows learners to express plans and predictions. For example, *Demain, je parlerai avec mon ami* (Tomorrow, I will speak with my friend) or *Nous irons à l'école* (We



will go to school). Practising with both regular and irregular verbs helps learners gain fluency in everyday communication.

Fill in the blank: The correct future tense form of *aller* for *nous* is _____.

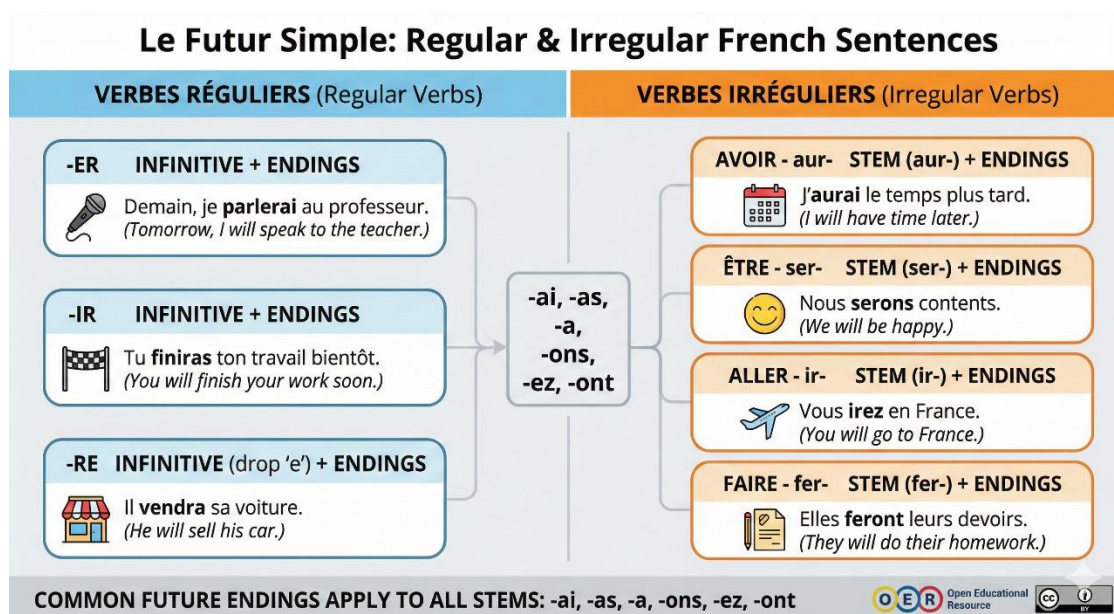


Figure 3.4: Practical applications of the future tense.

Pilot Questions 3.4

- Which of the following is the correct future tense form of *parler* for *nous*? a) parlons b) parlerons c) parlerez d) parlera
- The irregular future stem of *avoir* is: a) av- b) aur- c) ai- d) au-
- Which of the following is the correct future tense form of *être* for *je*? a) je suis b) j'étais c) je serai d) j'aurai
- The correct future tense form of *aller* for *nous* is: a) nous allons b) nous allions c) nous irons d) nous irions
- Which of the following sentences is correct in the future tense? a) Demain, je parle avec mon ami b) Demain, je parlerai avec mon ami c) Demain, je parlais avec mon ami d) Demain, je parlé avec mon ami

Series Summary

This Series has focused on the identification and conjugation of French verbs across key tenses, which is a vital skill for building accurate and fluent communication. We began by learning how to recognise verbs in their infinitive forms and distinguish between regular and irregular types. From there, we



explored present tense conjugation, covering both predictable patterns and essential irregular verbs. We then moved into the past tense with the *passé composé*, examining how auxiliaries and agreement rules shape its use. Finally, we studied the future tense, looking at regular endings and irregular stems, and applied them in practical sentence contexts.

By completing this Series, you should now be able to define and classify verbs (SLO 3.1), demonstrate present tense conjugations (SLO 3.2), apply rules for forming the *passé composé* with accuracy (SLO 3.3), and construct sentences using the simple future tense with both regular and irregular verbs (SLO 3.4). These outcomes provide you with a strong foundation for expressing actions and events across time, enabling clearer and more confident communication in French.

Glossary of Terms

- **Agreement:** The rule in French grammar that requires verbs, articles, or adjectives to match the subject in gender and number when necessary.
- **Auxiliary verb:** A helping verb used with a main verb to form compound tenses, such as *avoir* or *être* in the *passé composé*.
- **Future tense:** A verb form used to express actions that will happen, often formed with endings like *-ai, -as, -a, -ons, -ez, -ont*.
- **Infinitive:** The base form of a verb before conjugation, usually ending in *-er, -ir, or -re*.
- **Irregular verb:** A verb that does not follow standard conjugation patterns and must be memorised individually, such as *être* or *aller*.
- **Passé composé:** A common French past tense used to describe completed actions, formed with an auxiliary verb and a past participle.
- **Past participle:** The fixed verb form used with auxiliaries to create compound tenses, such as *parlé* (spoken) or *fini* (finished).
- **Present tense:** A verb form used to express actions happening now, with endings that vary depending on the verb group and subject.
- **Regular verb:** A verb that follows predictable conjugation patterns, such as *parler* or *finir*.
- **Stem:** The part of the verb that remains after removing the infinitive ending, used as the base for conjugation.



Concept Check Questions [Series 3]

Objective questions

1. (Linked to SLO 3.1) Which of the following is an infinitive ending in French? a) -er b) -ing c) -ed d) -tion
2. (Linked to SLO 3.2) The correct present tense form of *finir* for *ils* is: a) finit b) finissent c) finissons d) finis
3. (Linked to SLO 3.3) Which auxiliary verb is most commonly used in the passé composé? a) être b) avoir c) aller d) faire
4. (Linked to SLO 3.4) The irregular future stem of *être* is: a) et- b) ser- c) soi- d) eur-

Short-answer questions

5. (Linked to SLO 3.1) Define an infinitive verb in French and give one example.
6. (Linked to SLO 3.2) Provide the present tense conjugation of *parler* for *nous*.
7. (Linked to SLO 3.3) Write the passé composé of *aller* for *elle*.
8. (Linked to SLO 3.4) Construct a sentence in the future tense using the verb *avoir*.

Long-answer questions

9. (Linked to SLO 3.1 and SLO 3.2) Explain the difference between regular and irregular verbs in French, and analyse how this affects conjugation in the present tense.
10. (Linked to SLO 3.3 and SLO 3.4) Evaluate the challenges learners face when forming the passé composé and the future tense, and design strategies to practise these tenses effectively in sentences.

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 3]

Objective questions

1. a) -er
2. b) finissent
3. b) avoir
4. b) ser-

Short-answer questions

5. An infinitive is the base form of a verb before conjugation, e.g. *parler* (to speak).



6. *nous parlons*
7. *elle est allée*
8. Example: *Demain, j'aurai un examen* (Tomorrow, I will have an exam).

Long-answer questions

9. **Basic response:** Regular verbs follow predictable patterns, such as *parler* → *je parle, tu parles*. Irregular verbs, like *être* or *aller*, do not follow these rules and must be memorised.

Value-added response: Beyond memorisation, learners should practise irregular verbs in everyday contexts since they occur frequently. Comparing regular and irregular patterns helps reinforce recognition and usage.

10. **Basic response:** Learners often struggle with agreement rules in the *passé composé* and irregular stems in the future tense. Strategies include memorising common irregular forms and practising them in sentences.

Value-added response: Outstanding learners can design practice activities such as verb charts, flashcards, or writing short narratives that combine past and future tenses. They may also use authentic materials like French news articles or dialogues to see these tenses in real use, strengthening both accuracy and fluency.

Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 3]

Pilot Questions 3.1

1. *parle*
2. *-ir*
3. *parler*
4. *to finish*
5. *faire*

Pilot Questions 3.2

1. *parlons*
2. *finissent*
3. *vendez*
4. *êtes*
5. *aller*

Pilot Questions 3.3

1. *avoir*



2. nous avons parlé
3. aller
4. elle est allée
5. elles sont allées

Pilot Questions 3.4

1. parlerons
2. aur-
3. je serai
4. nous irons
5. Demain, je parlerai avec mon ami

References and Attributions [Series 3]

General references

- Course content adapted from *FRE 103: Introduction to French Grammar (2 Units C: LH 30)*.
- Suggested OER repositories for further study:
 - OER Commons (<https://www.oercommons.org>)
 - MERLOT (<https://www.merlot.org>)
 - Open Textbook Library (<https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks> (open.umn.edu in Bing))

Figures

- *Figure 3.1: Verbs as the core of French sentences* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a diagram showing verbs at the centre of French sentence construction.” Suggested OER search string: “OER diagram French verbs sentence structure.”
- *Figure 3.3: Agreement in passé composé* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a diagram showing agreement rules in passé composé with être, including gender and number.” Suggested OER search string: “OER diagram French passé composé agreement rules.”
- *Figure 3.4: Practical applications of the future tense* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a diagram showing French sentences in the future tense with regular and irregular verbs.” Suggested OER search string: “OER diagram French future tense sentences examples.”

Tables



- *Table 3.1: Common French infinitive endings* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Generate a table showing French infinitive verb endings with examples and meanings.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French infinitive verb endings examples table.”
- *Table 3.2: Present tense conjugation of parler* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Generate a table showing present tense conjugation of the French verb parler with meanings.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French verb parler present tense conjugation table.”
- *Table 3.3: Present tense conjugation of finir and vendre* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Generate a table showing present tense conjugation of French verbs finir and vendre with meanings.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French verb finir vendre present tense conjugation table.”
- *Table 3.4: Passé composé with avoir* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Generate a table showing passé composé formation with avoir for the verb parler.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French passé composé avoir examples table.”
- *Table 3.5: Simple future conjugation of parler* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Generate a table showing simple future conjugation of the French verb parler with meanings.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French verb parler simple future conjugation table.”

Boxes

- *Box 3.1: Examples of regular and irregular verbs* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a text box listing examples of regular and irregular French verbs.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French regular vs irregular verbs examples.”
- *Box 3.2: Present tense forms of common irregular verbs* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a text box listing present tense forms of common irregular French verbs être, avoir, aller, faire.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French irregular verbs être avoir aller faire present tense.”
- *Box 3.3: Common verbs using être in the passé composé* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a text box listing common French verbs that use être in the passé composé with examples.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French passé composé être verbs examples.”
- *Box 3.4: Common irregular stems in the future tense* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a text box listing common irregular stems in the French future tense with examples.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French irregular verb stems future tense examples.”



Series 4

Course Code: FRE 103

Course Title: Introduction to French Grammar

Course Credit load: 2 Units

List Series:

Series 1: Foundations of French Lexical Acquisition.

Series 2: Articles, Gender, and Plural Formation in French Grammar

Series 3: Verb Identification and Conjugation Across Key Tenses.

Series 4: Sentence Structures: Negative, Interrogative, and Imperative Forms.

Series 5: Interference of English and the Challenge of Faux Amis.

Parts Outline for Series 4

Part 4.1: Negative sentence structures

- 4.1.1 Basic negation with *ne...pas*
- 4.1.2 Variations of negation (*ne...jamais, ne...rien, ne...personne*)
- 4.1.3 Common errors in negation

Part 4.2: Interrogative sentence structures

- 4.2.1 Yes/no questions using inversion and *est-ce que*
- 4.2.2 Wh-questions with interrogative words (*qui, que, où, quand, pourquoi, comment*)
- 4.2.3 Spoken vs written forms of questions

Part 4.3: Imperative sentence structures

- 4.3.1 Formation of the imperative with regular verbs
- 4.3.2 Irregular verbs in the imperative (*être, avoir, savoir, vouloir*)
- 4.3.3 Politeness and tone in imperative sentences

Part 4.4: Integrating sentence structures in communication

- 4.4.1 Combining negative, interrogative, and imperative forms in dialogues
- 4.4.2 Practical applications in everyday French
- 4.4.3 Exercises for fluency and accuracy

Introduction

Sentence structures are essential for expressing meaning clearly in French. Beyond simple declarative sentences, learners must be able to form negatives, ask questions, and give commands. These structures



are used constantly in everyday communication, whether to deny something, seek information, or instruct politely. Mastering them ensures that learners can interact effectively in both spoken and written contexts.

The aim of this Series is to enable you to construct negative, interrogative, and imperative sentences accurately and confidently. By the end of this Series, you will be able to apply these structures in dialogues, recognise variations in usage, and integrate them naturally into communication.

We shall begin by exploring negative sentence structures, starting with the basic *ne...pas* form and moving to variations such as *ne...jamais* and *ne...rien*. Next, we will examine interrogative structures, including yes/no questions and wh-questions, with attention to differences between spoken and written forms. We will then study imperative sentences, focusing on both regular and irregular verbs, as well as politeness strategies. Finally, we will integrate all three structures into practical communication exercises, helping you use them fluently in everyday French.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 4.1:** construct negative sentences in French using *ne...pas* and other variations such as *ne...jamais* and *ne...rien*,
- **SLO 4.2:** demonstrate how to form interrogative sentences, including yes/no questions and wh-questions with interrogative words,
- **SLO 4.3:** apply rules for creating imperative sentences with both regular and irregular verbs,
- **SLO 4.4:** integrate negative, interrogative, and imperative structures into practical dialogues for effective communication.

4.1 Negative Sentence Structures

4.1.1 Basic negation with *ne...pas*

In French, the most common way to make a sentence negative is by using **ne...pas**, which surrounds the verb. For example, *Je parle français* (I speak French) becomes *Je ne parle pas français* (I do not speak French). The word *ne* comes before the verb, and *pas* follows it. In spoken French, *ne* is often dropped, but in writing it must be included.

Fill in the blank: The negative form of *Je mange une pomme* is _____.



Affirmative	Negative	Meaning
Je parle français	Je ne parle pas français	I do not speak French
Tu aimes le chocolat	Tu n'aimes pas le chocolat	You do not like chocolate
Il regarde la télé	Il ne regarde pas la télé	He does not watch TV

Table 4.1: Examples of basic negation with *ne...pas*.

4.1.2 Variations of negation (*ne...jamais*, *ne...rien*, *ne...personne*)

Beyond *ne...pas*, French uses other negative structures to express different meanings.

- **ne...jamais** means “never” (e.g. *Je ne voyage jamais* → I never travel).
- **ne...rien** means “nothing” (e.g. *Je ne vois rien* → I see nothing).
- **ne...personne** means “nobody” (e.g. *Je ne connais personne* → I know nobody).

These variations expand your ability to express negation in everyday situations.

Fill in the blank: The sentence *Je ne vois _____* means “I see nothing.”

French Negation Variations (OER)



ne...jamais (never)

Je **ne** fume jamais. (I never smoke.)

Il **n'est** jamais allé à Paris. (He has never been to Paris.)

Tu **ne** regardes jamais la télévision? (Do you never watch television?)



ne...rien (nothing)

Je **ne** veux rien. (I want nothing.)

Elle **n'a** rien acheté. (She bought nothing.)

Nous **n'avons** rien fait hier. (We did nothing yesterday.)



ne...personne (no one)

Je **ne** vois **personne**. (I see no one.)

Il **n'a** parlé à **personne**. (He spoke to no one.)

Personne n'est venu. (No one came. - subject)

Je **ne** connais **personne** ici. (I know no one here.)

Based on Open Educational Resources (OER). Remember 'ne' goes before the conjugated verb, and the second part (jamais, rien, personne) usually follows it, but can vary, especially with compound tenses and 'personne' as subject.



Box 4.1: Common variations of negation

4.1.3 Common errors in negation

Learners often make mistakes when forming negatives. A frequent error is forgetting to place *ne* before the verb or *pas* after it. Another mistake is using *pas* alone without *ne*, which is acceptable in casual speech but incorrect in formal writing. It is also important to remember agreement in sentences with *ne...personne* or *ne...rien*, as they function like subjects or objects.

Fill in the blank: In formal French, the word *ne* must always be placed _____ the verb.



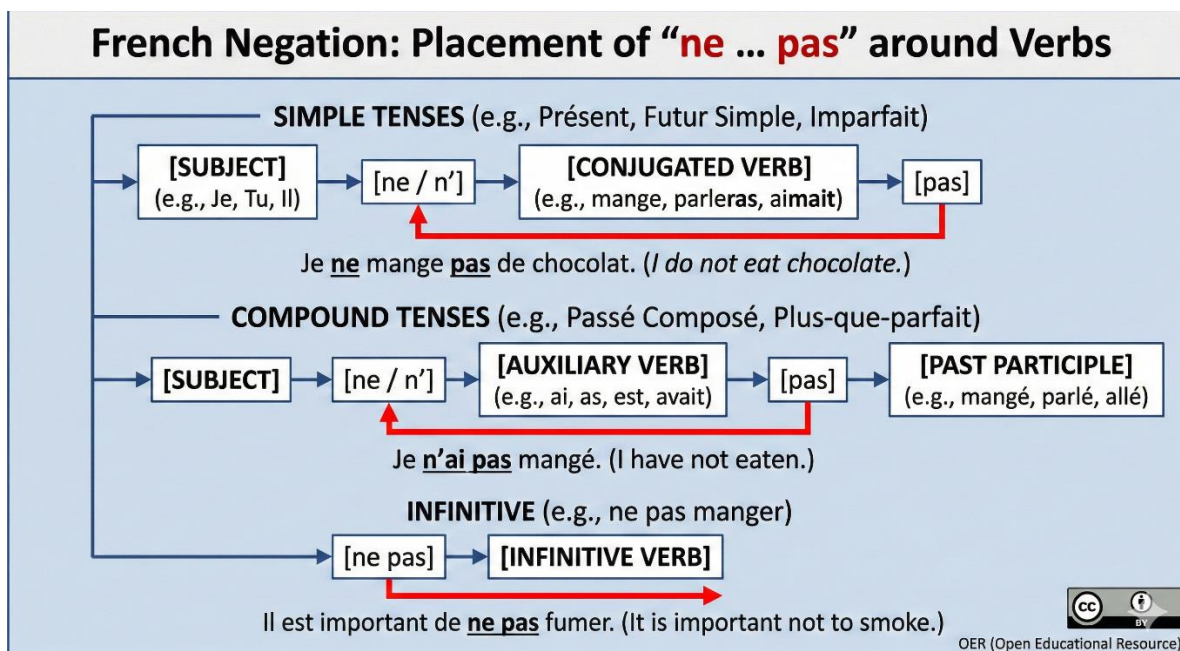


Figure 4.1: Placement of negation in French sentences.

Pilot Questions 4.1

- Which of the following is the correct negative form of *Je parle français*? a) Je parle pas français b) Je ne parle pas français c) Je pas parle français d) Je ne pas parle français
- The negative structure *ne...jamais* means: a) nothing b) nobody c) never d) not yet
- Which of the following is the correct negative form of *Il regarde la télé*? a) Il regarde pas la télé b) Il ne regarde pas la télé c) Il pas regarde la télé d) Il ne pas regarde la télé
- The sentence *Je ne connais personne* means: a) I know nothing b) I know nobody c) I never know d) I do not know something
- In formal French, which part of the negative structure must always come before the verb? a) pas b) rien c) ne d) jamais

4.2 Interrogative Sentence Structures

4.2.1 Yes/no questions using inversion and *est-ce que*

In French, yes/no questions can be formed in two main ways. The first is by using **inversion**, where the subject and verb switch places. For example, *Tu parles français* (You speak French) becomes *Parles-tu français ?* (Do you speak French?). The second method is by using **est-ce que** before the statement: *Est-ce que tu parles français ?* (Do you speak French?). Both are correct, though *est-ce que* is more common in everyday speech.



Fill in the blank: The question *Est-ce que tu aimes le chocolat ?* expects the answer _____ or _____.

Affirmative	Question (inversion)	Question (<i>est-ce que</i>)	Meaning
Tu parles français	Parles-tu français ?	Est-ce que tu parles français ?	Do you speak French?
Il aime le chocolat	Aime-t-il le chocolat ?	Est-ce que il aime le chocolat ?	Does he like chocolate?
Vous regardez la télé	Regardez-vous la télé ?	Est-ce que vous regardez la télé ?	Do you watch TV?

Table 4.2: Examples of yes/no questions

4.2.2 Wh-questions with interrogative words

Wh-questions are formed using interrogative words such as *qui* (who), *que/qu'est-ce que* (what), *où* (where), *quand* (when), *pourquoi* (why), and *comment* (how). These words are placed at the beginning of the question. For example, *Où habites-tu ?* (Where do you live?) or *Pourquoi étudies-tu le français ?* (Why do you study French?).

Fill in the blank: The interrogative word *comment* means _____.

French Interrogative Words & Meanings	
French Interrogative Word	English Meaning
qui	who / whom
que / qu'est-ce que / quoi	what
où	where
quand	when
pourquoi	why
comment	how
combien (de)	how much / how many
quel / quelle / quels / quelles	which / what
lequel / laquelle / lesquels / lesquelles	which one(s)
à qui	whose / to whom
à quoi	of what / about what

Based on Open Educational Resources (OER)

Box 4.2: Common interrogative words in French

4.2.3 Spoken vs written forms of questions

In spoken French, questions are often asked simply by raising intonation at the end of a statement, e.g. *Tu parles français ?* (You speak French?). In written French, however, inversion and *est-ce que* are more common and considered grammatically correct. Learners should be aware of these differences to communicate appropriately in both contexts.

Fill in the blank: In spoken French, a simple way to ask a question is by raising _____ at the end of a statement.



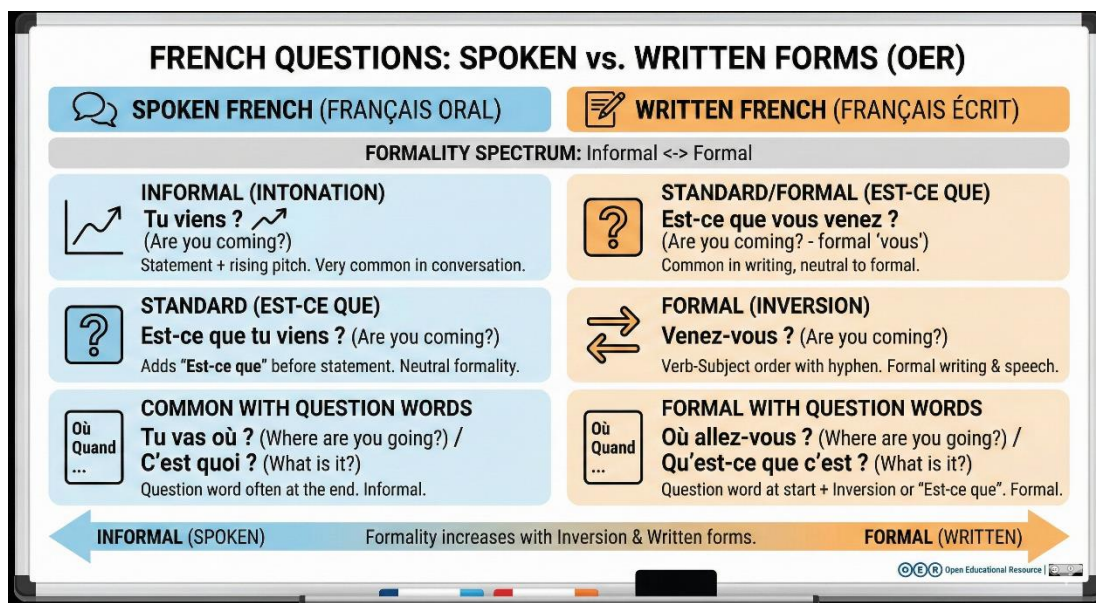


Figure 4.2: Spoken vs written interrogative structures.

Pilot Questions 4.2

- Which of the following is a correct inversion question? a) Tu parles français ? b) Parles-tu français ? c) Tu français parles ? d) Est-ce que tu parles français ?
- The interrogative word *où* means: a) why b) when c) where d) who
- Which of the following is a correct *est-ce que* question? a) Est-ce que tu parles français ? b) Tu est-ce que parles français ? c) Est-ce que parles-tu français ? d) Est-ce que français tu parles ?
- In spoken French, which method is often used to ask questions informally? a) inversion b) est-ce que c) intonation d) passive voice
- The interrogative word *pourquoi* means: a) how b) what c) why d) who

4.3 Imperative Sentence Structures

4.3.1 Formation of the imperative with regular verbs

The **imperative** is used to give commands, instructions, or advice. In French, it is formed using the present tense of verbs, but without the subject pronoun. For example, *Tu parles* (You speak) becomes *Parle !* (Speak!). For *nous* and *vous*, the forms are *Parlons !* (Let's speak!) and *Parlez !* (Speak!). The imperative is straightforward with regular verbs, but learners must remember that subject pronouns are omitted.

Fill in the blank: The imperative form of *nous mangeons* is _____.



Subject	Present tense	Imperative	Meaning
tu	tu parles	parle	Speak!
nous	nous parlons	parlons	Let's speak!
vous	vous parlez	parlez	Speak! (formal/plural)

Table 4.3: Imperative forms of regular verbs (parler).

4.3.2 Irregular verbs in the imperative (*être*, *avoir*, *savoir*, *vouloir*)

Some verbs have irregular imperative forms that must be memorised.

- *être*: sois, soyons, soyez
- *avoir*: aie, ayons, ayez
- *savoir*: sache, sachons, sachez
- *vouloir*: veuille, veuillons, veuillez

These forms are often used in polite or formal contexts, especially *veuillez* (please).

Fill in the blank: The imperative form of *avoir* for *tu* is _____.

Imperative Forms of French Irregular Verbs: Être, Avoir, Savoir, Vouloir (OER)

Verb (Infinitive)	ÊTRE (to be)	AVOIR (to have)	SAVOIR (to know)	VOULOIR (to want)
Tu (Informal Sing.)	Sois	Aie	Sache	Veuille
Nous (Let's...)	Soyons	Ayons	Sachons	Veuillons
Vous (Formal/Plural)	Soyez	Ayez	Sachez	Veuillez

Examples: Sois sage ! (Be good!); Ayons du courage ! (Let's have courage!);
Sachez la vérité ! (Know the truth!); Veuillez patienter. (Please wait. - formal)



Box 4.3: Imperative forms of common irregular verbs

4.3.3 Politeness and tone in imperative sentences

The imperative can sound direct or even harsh if not softened. In French, politeness is often added with words like *s'il vous plaît* (please) or by using the polite imperative forms such as *veuillez*. For example, *Fermez la porte, s'il vous plaît* (Close the door, please). This makes commands more socially acceptable and respectful.

Fill in the blank: To make *Fermez la porte* more polite, add _____ at the end.



Comparing French Imperative: Polite vs. Direct (OER Diagram)

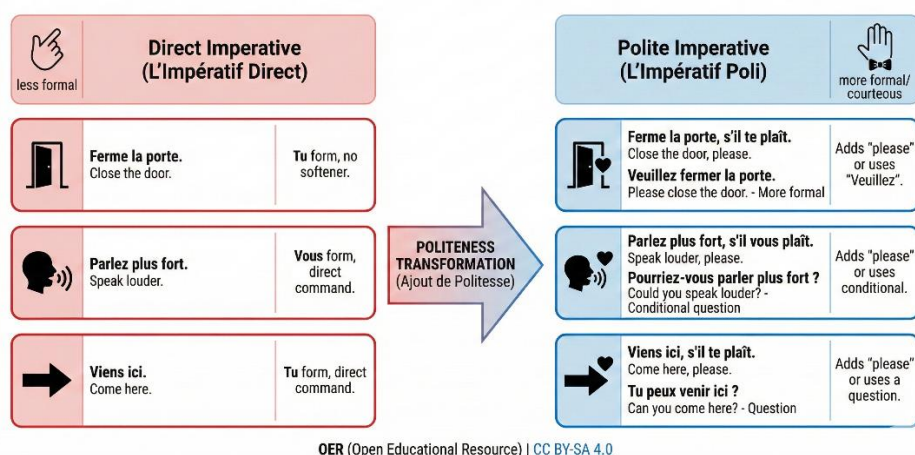


Figure 4.3: Politeness in imperative structures.

Pilot Questions 4.3

- Which of the following is the correct imperative form of *parler* for *tu*? a) tu parles b) parle c) parlez d) parlons
- The imperative form of *avoir* for *tu* is: a) aie b) ai c) ayons d) avez
- Which of the following is the imperative form of *être* for *vous*? a) sois b) soyons c) soyez d) être
- To make an imperative sentence more polite, you can add: a) merci b) s'il vous plaît c) bonjour d) au revoir
- Which of the following is a polite imperative form often used in formal contexts? a) veuille b) veuillez c) veux d) vouloir

4.4 Integrating Sentence Structures in Communication

4.4.1 Combining negative, interrogative, and imperative forms in dialogues

To communicate effectively, learners must be able to combine different sentence structures in real-life dialogues. For example:

- Negative: *Je ne veux pas sortir ce soir* (I do not want to go out tonight).
- Interrogative: *Pourquoi ne veux-tu pas sortir ?* (Why do you not want to go out?).
- Imperative: *Alors, reste à la maison !* (Then, stay at home!). This integration shows how negatives, questions, and commands can flow naturally in conversation.

Fill in the blank: The sentence *Pourquoi ne veux-tu pas sortir ?* is an example of an _____ structure.



Structure	Example	Meaning
Negative	Je ne veux pas sortir ce soir	I do not want to go out tonight
Interrogative	Pourquoi ne veux-tu pas sortir ?	Why do you not want to go out?
Imperative	Alors, reste à la maison !	Then, stay at home!

Table 4.4: Dialogue combining sentence structures.

4.4.2 Practical applications in everyday French

These structures are used constantly in daily life. For example, when shopping:

- Negative: *Je n'ai pas d'argent* (I do not have money).
- Interrogative: *Combien ça coûte ?* (How much does it cost?).
- Imperative: *Donnez-moi ce livre, s'il vous plaît* (Give me this book, please). By practising these forms in everyday contexts, learners gain confidence in expressing themselves clearly and appropriately.

Fill in the blank: The sentence *Donnez-moi ce livre, s'il vous plaît* is an example of an _____ sentence.

Everyday French Sentence Structures: Negative, Interrogative, Imperative (OER Examples)

⊘ NEGATIVE SENTENCES (La Négation - ne...pas)

- Je **ne** comprends **pas**. (I do not understand.)
- Elle **n'**aime **pas** le café. (She does not like coffee.)
- Nous **ne** sommes **pas** prêts. (We are not ready.)
- Il **n'y** a **pas** de pain. (There is no bread.)

? INTERROGATIVE SENTENCES (L'Interrogation - Asking Questions)

- **Est-ce que** tu parles français ? (Do you speak French?)
- Comment t'appelles-tu ? / **Tu t'appelles comment** ? (What is your name?)
- Où sont les toilettes ? (Where are the toilets?)
- Quelle heure est-il ? (What time is it?)

! IMPERATIVE SENTENCES (L'Impératif - Commands & Requests)

- **Parlez** plus lentement, s'il vous plaît. (Speak more slowly, please. - formal/plural)
- **Écoute-moi** ! (Listen to me! - informal singular)
- **Allons-y** ! (Let's go!)
- **Ne m'oublie pas** ! (Don't forget me!)

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Box 4.4: Everyday uses of sentence structures

4.4.3 Exercises for fluency and accuracy

To master these structures, learners should practise by writing short dialogues that include at least one negative, one interrogative, and one imperative sentence. Role-playing conversations with classmates or



practising aloud also helps reinforce fluency. Accuracy comes from paying attention to word order, auxiliary use, and politeness markers.

Fill in the blank: To improve fluency, learners should practise by writing short _____ that combine different sentence structures.

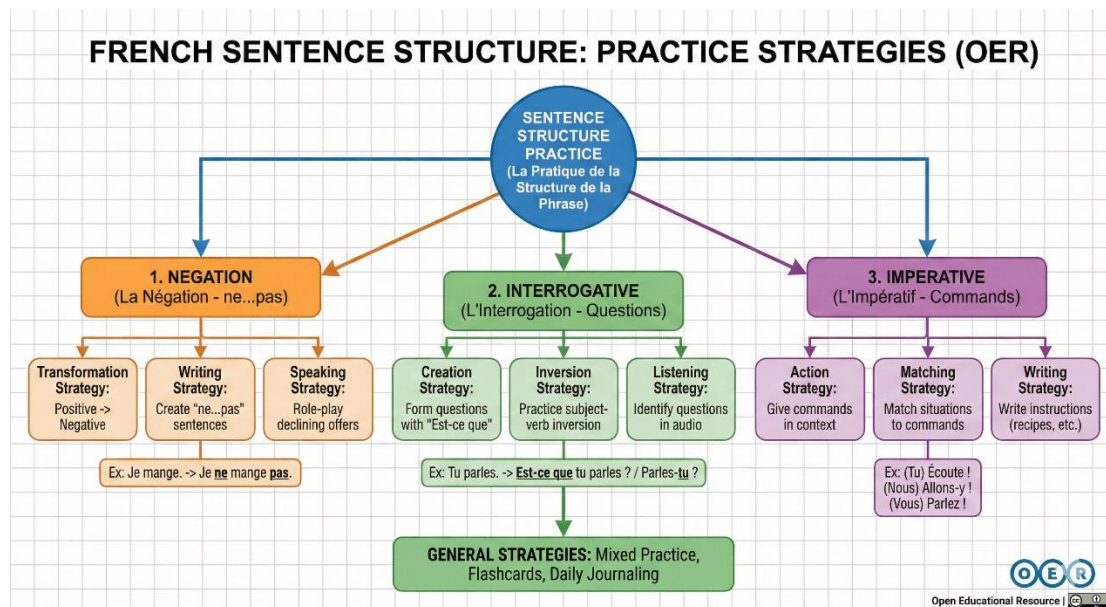


Figure 4.4: Exercises for fluency and accuracy.

Pilot Questions 4.4

- Which of the following is an example of an interrogative sentence? a) Je ne veux pas sortir ce soir b) Pourquoi ne veux-tu pas sortir ? c) Reste à la maison ! d) Je parle français
- The sentence *Je n'ai pas d'argent* is an example of: a) interrogative b) imperative c) negative d) affirmative
- Which of the following is an imperative sentence? a) Donnez-moi ce livre, s'il vous plaît b) Combien ça coûte ? c) Je ne connais personne d) Tu parles français
- To practise fluency, learners should: a) memorise vocabulary lists only b) write short dialogues combining sentence structures c) avoid using interrogatives d) focus only on negatives
- The sentence *Combien ça coûte ?* means: a) How much does it cost? b) Where is it? c) Why is it expensive? d) Who sells it?



Series Summary

This Series has focused on how to construct negative, interrogative, and imperative sentences in French, which are essential for clear and effective communication. We began with negative structures, starting from the basic *ne...pas* form and moving to variations such as *ne...jamais*, *ne...rien*, and *ne...personne*. We then explored interrogative structures, including yes/no questions formed by inversion or *est-ce que*, and wh-questions using interrogative words. Next, we studied imperative sentences, learning how to form them with regular verbs, memorise irregular forms, and apply politeness strategies. Finally, we integrated all three structures into practical dialogues and everyday contexts to reinforce fluency and accuracy.

By completing this Series, you should now be able to construct negative sentences (SLO 4.1), demonstrate interrogative forms (SLO 4.2), apply rules for creating imperative sentences (SLO 4.3), and integrate these structures into dialogues for effective communication (SLO 4.4). These outcomes provide you with the tools to express denial, ask questions, and give instructions confidently, strengthening your ability to interact naturally in French.

Glossary of Terms

- **Imperative:** A verb form used to give commands, instructions, or advice, often without subject pronouns.
- **Inversion:** A method of forming questions in French by reversing the order of the subject and verb, e.g. *Parles-tu français ?*.
- **Interrogative word:** A word used to ask questions, such as *qui* (who), *où* (where), *quand* (when), *pourquoi* (why), and *comment* (how).
- **Negative structure:** A sentence form that expresses denial or absence, commonly using *ne...pas* or variations like *ne...jamais* (never), *ne...rien* (nothing), and *ne...personne* (nobody).
- **Politeness marker:** A word or phrase added to soften commands or requests, such as *s'il vous plaît* (please) or *veuillez* (kindly).
- **Yes/no question:** A type of interrogative sentence that expects a simple answer of “yes” or “no,” formed using inversion or *est-ce que*.

Concept Check Questions [Series 4]

Objective questions



1. (Linked to SLO 4.1) Which of the following correctly expresses negation in French? a) Je pas parle français b) Je ne parle pas français c) Je parle ne pas français d) Je ne pas parle français
2. (Linked to SLO 4.2) The interrogative word *où* means: a) why b) where c) who d) when
3. (Linked to SLO 4.3) Which of the following is the imperative form of *avoir* for *tu*? a) ai b) aie c) ayons d) avez
4. (Linked to SLO 4.4) The sentence *Pourquoi ne veux-tu pas sortir ?* is an example of: a) imperative b) interrogative c) negative d) affirmative

Short-answer questions

5. (Linked to SLO 4.1) Write the negative form of *Je mange une pomme*.
6. (Linked to SLO 4.2) Construct a yes/no question using *est-ce que* with the verb *parler*.
7. (Linked to SLO 4.3) Provide the imperative form of *parler* for *vous*.
8. (Linked to SLO 4.4) Write a short dialogue of two sentences that combines one negative and one imperative structure.

Long-answer questions

9. (Linked to SLO 4.1 and SLO 4.2) Analyse the differences between negative and interrogative structures in French, explaining how each changes the meaning of a sentence.
10. (Linked to SLO 4.3 and SLO 4.4) Evaluate the importance of politeness in imperative sentences and design strategies for integrating negative, interrogative, and imperative forms into everyday communication.

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 4]

Objective questions

1. b) Je ne parle pas français
2. b) where
3. b) aie
4. b) interrogative

Short-answer questions

5. *Je ne mange pas une pomme.*
6. *Est-ce que tu parles français ?*
7. *Parlez !*
8. Example: *Je ne veux pas sortir. Reste à la maison !*



Long-answer questions

9. **Basic response:** Negative structures deny or negate an action, e.g. *Je ne parle pas français*. Interrogative structures ask questions, either yes/no or wh-questions, e.g. *Parles-tu français ?*.

Value-added response: Beyond their basic functions, negatives and interrogatives shape tone and context. Negatives can express refusal or limitation, while interrogatives invite interaction. Analysing both helps learners understand how meaning shifts depending on sentence structure.

10. **Basic response:** Politeness in imperatives is important to avoid sounding harsh. Adding *s'il vous plaît* or using forms like *veuillez* makes commands more respectful. Strategies include practising polite forms and combining them with negatives and questions in dialogues.

Value-added response: Outstanding learners can design role-play scenarios where they practise giving instructions politely, asking clarifying questions, and responding with negatives. They may also analyse authentic French conversations to see how politeness markers are naturally integrated, thereby improving both accuracy and cultural awareness.

Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 4]

Pilot Questions 4.1

1. b) Je ne parle pas français
2. c) never
3. b) Il ne regarde pas la télé
4. b) I know nobody
5. c) ne

Pilot Questions 4.2

1. b) Parles-tu français ?
2. c) where
3. a) Est-ce que tu parles français ?
4. c) intonation
5. c) why

Pilot Questions 4.3

1. b) parle
2. a) aie
3. c) soyez



4. b) s'il vous plaît
5. b) veuillez

Pilot Questions 4.4

1. b) Pourquoi ne veux-tu pas sortir ?
2. c) negative
3. a) Donnez-moi ce livre, s'il vous plaît
4. b) write short dialogues combining sentence structures
5. a) How much does it cost?

References and Attributions [Series 4]

General references

- Course content adapted from *FRE 103: Introduction to French Grammar (2 Units C: LH 30)*.
- Suggested OER repositories for further study:
 - OER Commons (<https://www.oercommons.org>)
 - MERLOT (<https://www.merlot.org>)
 - Open Textbook Library (<https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks> (open.umn.edu in Bing))

Figures

- *Figure 4.1: Placement of negation in French sentences* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a diagram showing placement of ne and pas around verbs in French sentences.” Suggested OER search string: “OER diagram French negation ne pas placement.”
- *Figure 4.2: Spoken vs written interrogative structures* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a diagram comparing spoken and written forms of French questions.” Suggested OER search string: “OER diagram French spoken vs written questions.”
- *Figure 4.3: Politeness in imperative structures* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a diagram comparing polite and direct imperative sentences in French.” Suggested OER search string: “OER diagram French imperative politeness examples.”
- *Figure 4.4: Exercises for fluency and accuracy* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a diagram showing practice strategies for French sentence structures including negatives, interrogatives, and imperatives.” Suggested OER search string: “OER diagram French sentence structure practice strategies.”

Tables



- *Table 4.1: Examples of basic negation with ne...pas* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Generate a table showing French sentences in affirmative and negative forms using ne...pas.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French negation ne pas examples table.”
- *Table 4.2: Examples of yes/no questions* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Generate a table showing French yes/no questions using inversion and est-ce que.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French yes/no questions inversion est-ce que examples table.”
- *Table 4.3: Imperative forms of regular verbs (parler)* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Generate a table showing imperative forms of the French verb parler with meanings.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French imperative regular verbs examples table.”
- *Table 4.4: Dialogue combining sentence structures* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Generate a table showing a short French dialogue combining negative, interrogative, and imperative sentences.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French dialogue combining sentence structures examples.”

Boxes

- *Box 4.1: Common variations of negation* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a text box listing French negation variations ne...jamais, ne...rien, ne...personne with examples.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French negation variations jamais rien personne examples.”
- *Box 4.2: Common interrogative words in French* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a text box listing French interrogative words with English meanings.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French interrogative words examples.”
- *Box 4.3: Imperative forms of common irregular verbs* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a text box listing imperative forms of French irregular verbs être, avoir, savoir, vouloir.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French imperative irregular verbs examples.”
- *Box 4.4: Everyday uses of sentence structures* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a text box listing everyday examples of French negative, interrogative, and imperative sentences.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French everyday sentence structures examples.”



Series 5

Course Code: FRE 103

Course Title: Introduction to French Grammar

Course Credit load: 2 Units

List Series:

Series 1: Foundations of French Lexical Acquisition.

Series 2: Articles, Gender, and Plural Formation in French Grammar

Series 3: Verb Identification and Conjugation Across Key Tenses.

Series 4: Sentence Structures: Negative, Interrogative, and Imperative Forms.

Series 5: Interference of English and the Challenge of Faux Amis.

Parts Outline for Series 5

Part 5.1: Language interference between English and French

- 5.1.1 Definition of language interference
- 5.1.2 Common patterns of English influence on French usage
- 5.1.3 Examples of structural and lexical interference

Part 5.2: Understanding *faux amis* (false friends)

- 5.2.1 Definition and importance of *faux amis*
- 5.2.2 Categories of *faux amis* (semantic, phonetic, orthographic)
- 5.2.3 Illustrative examples of misleading word pairs

Part 5.3: Strategies for overcoming interference and *faux amis*

- 5.3.1 Techniques for recognising and avoiding interference
- 5.3.2 Methods for mastering *faux amis* through practice
- 5.3.3 Practical exercises for accuracy and fluency

Part 5.4: Integrating awareness into communication

- 5.4.1 Applying knowledge of interference in spoken and written French
- 5.4.2 Using *faux amis* correctly in context
- 5.4.3 Building confidence in authentic communication

Introduction

When learning French, English speakers often face challenges caused by interference from their first language. This interference can lead to errors in grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, as learners



unconsciously transfer English structures into French. One of the most persistent difficulties is the presence of *faux amis* (false friends), words that look similar in both languages but differ in meaning.

The aim of this Series is to help you recognise and overcome the influence of English on your French learning, while also mastering the correct use of *faux amis*. By the end of this Series, you will be able to identify common interference patterns, distinguish between true cognates and false friends, and apply strategies to avoid confusion in communication.

We shall begin by defining language interference and examining how English influences French usage. Next, we will explore the concept of *faux amis*, categorising them and illustrating with examples. We will then focus on strategies for overcoming interference and mastering *faux amis* through practice. Finally, we will integrate this awareness into spoken and written communication, building confidence in authentic French usage.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 5.1:** define language interference and illustrate common patterns of English influence on French usage,
- **SLO 5.2:** explain the concept of *faux amis* and categorise them into semantic, phonetic, and orthographic types,
- **SLO 5.3:** apply strategies to recognise and avoid interference and misuse of *faux amis* in practice,
- **SLO 5.4:** demonstrate how to integrate awareness of interference and *faux amis* into spoken and written communication for greater accuracy and fluency.

5.1 Language Interference Between English and French

5.1.1 Definition of language interference

Language interference refers to the influence of one language on another when a learner transfers structures, vocabulary, or pronunciation patterns from their first language into the second. For English speakers learning French, this often results in errors because English and French differ in grammar, word order, and usage. Recognising interference is the first step towards correcting it.

Fill in the blank: When learners transfer structures from their first language into another, this is called _____.



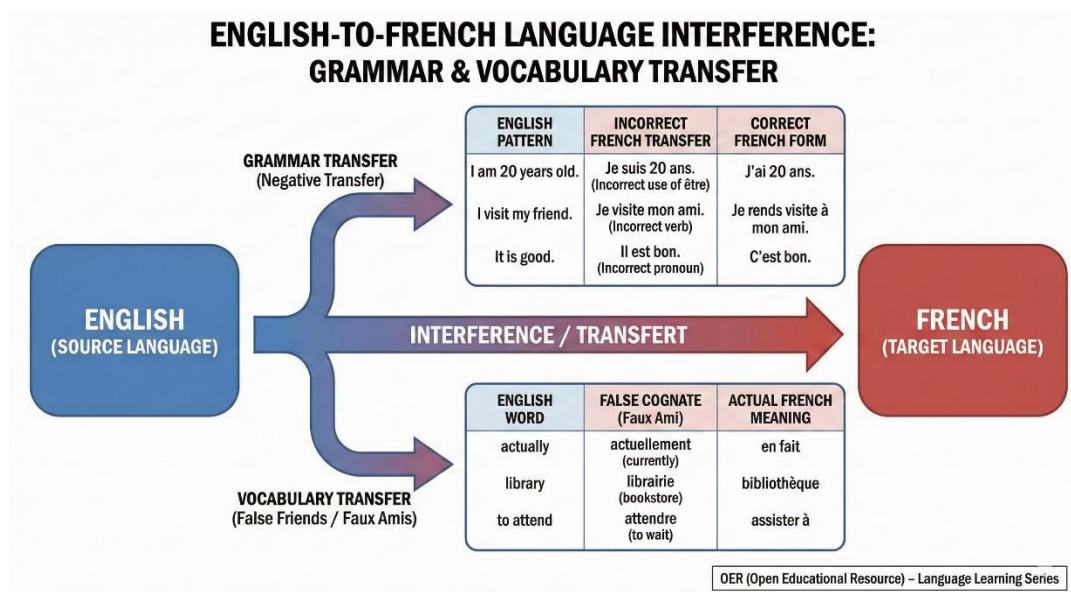


Figure 5.1: Language interference between English and French.

5.1.2 Common patterns of English influence on French usage

English speakers often assume that French follows the same rules as English. For example, word order errors occur when learners say *Je joue football* instead of *Je joue au football*. Another common pattern is false translation, where learners directly translate English expressions into French without considering idiomatic differences. Pronunciation interference also occurs when English sounds are imposed on French words, such as pronouncing *r* in a non-French way.

Fill in the blank: The incorrect sentence *Je joue football* is an example of interference in _____.

Type of interference	Example (incorrect)	Correct form
Word order	Je joue football	Je joue au football
False translation	Je suis chaud (I am hot)	J'ai chaud
Pronunciation	Pronouncing <i>r</i> like English	French guttural <i>r</i>

Table 5.1: Common patterns of English interference in French.

5.1.3 Examples of structural and lexical interference

Structural interference occurs when learners apply English grammar rules to French. For instance, using auxiliary verbs incorrectly, such as *Je suis étudié* instead of *J'ai étudié*. Lexical interference happens when learners confuse similar-looking words, leading to misuse. For example, *actuellement* in French means “currently,” not “actually.” These errors can change meaning and cause misunderstanding.



Fill in the blank: The French word *actuellement* means _____, not “actually.”

Structural & Lexical Interference: English-French (OER Examples)			
STRUCTURAL INTERFERENCE (Grammar & Syntax) Incorrect Transfer of English Structures to French	LEXICAL INTERFERENCE (Vocabulary - Faux Amis) Deceptive Cognates & False Friends		
Examples [X] I am 20 years old. -> Je suis 20 ans. [✓] J'ai 20 ans. [X] I visit my friend. -> Je visite mon ami. [✓] Je rends visite à mon ami. [X] It is good. -> Il est bon. [✓] C'est bon. [X] The girl whose father I know. -> La fille dont le père je connais. [✓] La fille dont je connais le père. [X] I am looking for. -> Je cherche pour. [✓] Je cherche.	English Word	False Friend (French)	Actual French Meaning Correct French Translation of English
	actually	actuellement	currently en fait
	library	librairie	bookstore bibliothèque
	to attend	assister à	to attend (an event) attendre (to wait)
	sensible	sensible	sensitive raisonnable
	eventually	éventuellement	possibly finalement
	coin	coin	corner pièce de monnaie
	bless	blessier	to hurt/wound bénir

OER (Open Educational Resource) - Based on common learner errors due to L1 influence.

Box 5.1: Examples of structural and lexical interference

Pilot Questions 5.1

1. What is the term used when learners transfer structures from their first language into another?
2. Correct the interference error: *Je joue football.*
3. Which type of interference occurs when learners confuse similar-looking words?
4. Fill in the blank: *Actuellement* means _____ in English.
5. Give one example of pronunciation interference between English and French.

5.2 Understanding *Faux Amis* (False Friends)

5.2.1 Definition and importance of *faux amis*

Faux amis are words that look or sound similar in English and French but have different meanings. For example, the French word *actuellement* means “currently,” not “actually.” These false friends can easily mislead learners, causing them to use words incorrectly in speech or writing. Recognising *faux amis* is important because they often appear in everyday communication and can lead to misunderstandings.

Fill in the blank: The French word *librairie* means _____, not “library.”



FRENCH FAUX AMIS IN CONTEXT	
Sample Usage & Correct Meaning	
French Word & Usage	Correct Meaning & Note
actuellement: Elle travaille actuellement à Paris. (She is the currently working to Paris).	currently (not "actually")
librairie: J'ai acheté ce livre à la librairie du quartier. (He bought the local book store)	sensitive sensible à (te sensitive" reasonable)
sensible:	
expérimenter: Nous allons expérimenter une nouvelle. (I am going to try on the new method).	to experiment / to test (not "to experience")
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Figure 5.2: Examples of faux amis between English and French.

5.2.2 Categories of faux amis (semantic, phonetic, orthographic)

Faux amis can be grouped into categories:

- **Semantic false friends:** Words that look similar but differ in meaning, e.g. *sensible* (French: sensitive, English: reasonable).
- **Phonetic false friends:** Words that sound alike but are unrelated in meaning, e.g. *pain* (French: bread, English: suffering).
- **Orthographic false friends:** Words with similar spelling but different meanings, e.g. *coin* (French: corner, English: money).

Fill in the blank: The French word *sensible* means _____ in English.

Category	French word	Misleading English word	Correct meaning
Semantic	sensible	sensible	sensitive
Phonetic	pain	pain	bread
Orthographic	coin	coin	corner

Table 5.2: Categories of faux amis.

5.2.3 Illustrative examples of misleading word pairs

Some *faux amis* are particularly common and can cause confusion for English speakers. For instance:

- *déception* means "disappointment," not "deception."



- *préservatif* means “condom,” not “preservative.”
- *assister* means “to attend,” not “to assist.” These examples highlight how learners must be cautious and check meanings carefully rather than relying on similarity.

Fill in the blank: The French word *assister* means “to attend,” not _____.

FRENCH FAUX AMIS		
Common Examples		
French Word	Misleading English	Correct Meaning
actuellement	actually	currently
bibliothèque	bookstore	library
déception	brave	courageous / good
chair	experience	possibly / perhaps
expérience	fabric	experiment / expertise
fabrique	gentle	library
gentil	money	currency / change
pronnaie	factory	condom
sensible	nice / kind	sensible / reasonable

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Box 5.2: Common misleading faux amis

Pilot Questions 5.2

1. Define *faux amis*.
2. The French word *librairie* means _____ in English.
3. Which category of *faux amis* does *pain* (bread) belong to?
4. Fill in the blank: *Sensible* in French means _____.
5. What does *assister* mean in French?

5.3 Strategies for Overcoming Interference and *Faux Amis*

5.3.1 Techniques for recognising and avoiding interference

One effective way to reduce **interference** is to consciously compare French structures with English ones. For example, learners should note that French often requires prepositions where English does not, such as



jouer au football instead of *play football*. Another technique is to practise listening and reading authentic French materials, which helps reinforce correct patterns. Keeping a personal list of common interference errors can also serve as a reminder to avoid repeating them.

Fill in the blank: The correct French expression for “play football” is *jouer* _____ *football*.

Technique	Example	Benefit
Compare structures	<i>jouer au football</i> vs <i>play football</i>	Reinforces correct grammar
Use authentic materials	French radio, newspapers	Builds exposure to natural usage
Keep error lists	Record common mistakes	Prevents repeated errors

Table 5.3: Techniques for recognising and avoiding interference.

5.3.2 Methods for mastering *faux amis* through practice

To master **faux amis**, learners should create flashcards with the French word, its correct meaning, and the misleading English equivalent. Regular practice with these cards helps reinforce correct usage. Another method is to use the words in sentences, ensuring they are applied in the right context. Group study or peer correction can also be effective, as learners often spot each other’s misuse of *faux amis*.

Fill in the blank: The French word *déception* should be translated as _____, not “deception.”

MASTERING FRENCH FAUX AMIS	
Practice Strategies	
Active Learning	Resources & Habits
1. Flashcards (Spaced Repetition)	5. Dedicated Faux Amis/Apps
2. Contextual Sentences	6. Dedicated Faux Amis Lists/Apps
3. Quizzes & Self-Testing	7. Read & Listen Actively
4. Usage in Conversation/Writing	7. Etymology Checks
	8. Regular Review Sessions
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Box 5.3: Methods for mastering *faux amis*

5.3.3 Practical exercises for accuracy and fluency

Practical exercises help learners apply strategies in real communication. For example, writing short dialogues that include both interference-prone structures and *faux amis* ensures learners practise avoiding mistakes. Role-playing everyday scenarios such as shopping or attending class can highlight where interference and *faux amis* are most likely to occur. Recording and reviewing spoken practice also helps learners identify errors in pronunciation and usage.



Fill in the blank: One effective way to practise avoiding *faux amis* is to write short _____ that use them correctly.



Figure 5.3: Practice strategies for accuracy and fluency.

Pilot Questions 5.3

1. Which preposition is required in the correct French phrase *jouer au football*?
2. Name one technique for recognising and avoiding interference.
3. Fill in the blank: *Déception* should be translated as _____.
4. What learning tool can be used to practise *faux amis* effectively?
5. Suggest one practical exercise that helps improve fluency and accuracy.

5.4 Integrating Awareness into Communication

5.4.1 Applying knowledge of interference in spoken and written French

To communicate effectively, learners must apply their awareness of **interference** by consciously checking sentence structures before speaking or writing. For example, instead of directly translating “I am hot” into *Je suis chaud*, learners should recall that the correct French form is *J’ai chaud*. This habit of pausing to reflect helps prevent errors and builds accuracy in both everyday and academic contexts.

Fill in the blank: The correct French translation of “I am hot” is _____.

English expression	Incorrect French (interference)	Correct French
I am hot	Je suis chaud	J’ai chaud



English expression	Incorrect French (interference)	Correct French
I play football	Je joue football	Je joue au football
I studied	Je suis étudié	J'ai étudié

Table 5.4: Examples of applying awareness of interference.

5.4.2 Using *faux amis* correctly in context

Learners must also practise using **faux amis** correctly in sentences to avoid confusion. For example, *déception* should be used to mean “disappointment,” not “deception.” Similarly, *librairie* should be used for “bookshop,” not “library.” By writing sentences and dialogues with these words, learners reinforce their correct meanings and avoid misleading translations.

Fill in the blank: The French word *déception* means _____, not “deception.”

Incorrect 'Cognate' (False Friend)	French Word (Faux Ami)	Correct English Meaning
ACTUALLY (In reality)	ACTUELLEMENT	CURRENTLY (At the moment)
LIBRARY (Place for borrowing books)	LIBRAIRIE	BOOKSTORE (Shop for buying books)
ATTEND (To be present at)	ATTENDRE	TO WAIT (To stay for something)
BLESS (To confer holy favour)	BLESSER	TO WOUND / TO HURT
MONEY (Wealth in general)	MONNAIE	CHANGE / COINS
SENSIBLE (Practical, reasonable)	SENSIBLE	SENSITIVE (Easily affected)
LOCATION (A particular place)	LOCATION	RENTAL (Act of renting)
PRESERVATIVE (Food additive)	PRÉSERVATIF	CONDOM

Box 5.4: Correct usage of selected *faux amis*

5.4.3 Building confidence in authentic communication

Confidence grows when learners practise communication in authentic contexts, such as role-playing conversations, writing short essays, or engaging in discussions with peers. By consistently applying strategies to avoid interference and correctly using *faux amis*, learners develop fluency and accuracy. Over time, this awareness becomes automatic, allowing them to focus on expressing ideas rather than worrying about mistakes.

Fill in the blank: Confidence in communication grows when learners practise in _____ contexts.



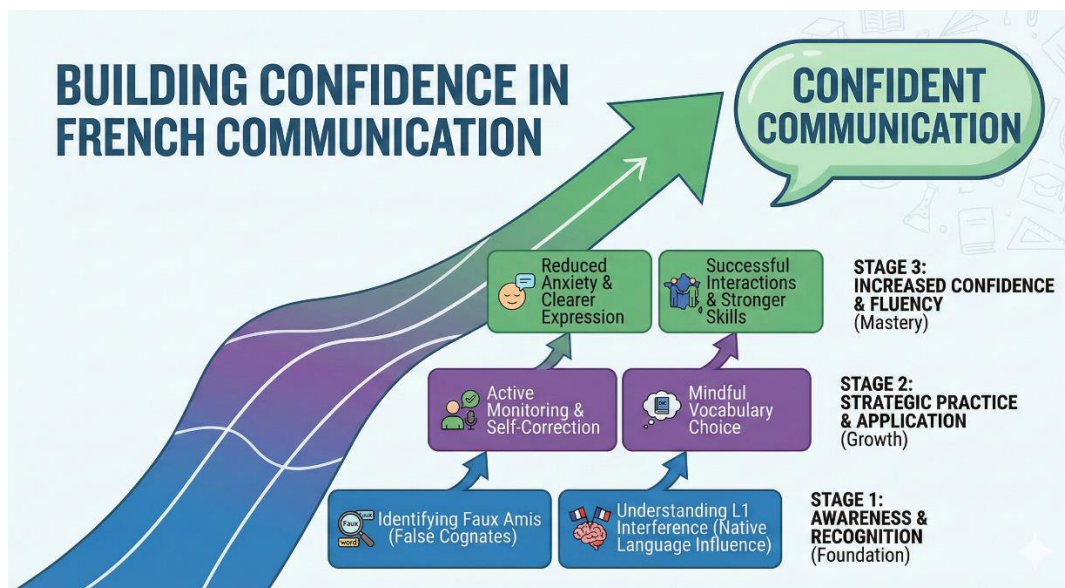


Figure 5.4: Building confidence in authentic communication.

Pilot Questions 5.4

1. Translate correctly: “I am hot” → _____.
2. Fill in the blank: *Déception* means _____, not “deception.”
3. Which *faux amis* means “bookshop,” not “library”?
4. Confidence in communication grows when learners practise in _____ contexts.
5. Give one example of how awareness of interference can improve written French.

Series Summary

This Series has explored how English interferes with French learning and the challenges posed by *faux amis*. We began by defining language interference and identifying common patterns such as word order mistakes, false translations, and pronunciation issues. We then examined *faux amis*, categorising them into semantic, phonetic, and orthographic types, and illustrated how misleading word pairs can cause confusion. Building on this, we discussed practical strategies for recognising and avoiding interference, mastering *faux amis* through practice, and applying exercises to strengthen accuracy and fluency. Finally, we integrated this awareness into communication, showing how learners can apply their knowledge in spoken and written contexts to build confidence.

By completing this Series, you should now be able to define language interference and illustrate its patterns (SLO 5.1), explain and categorise *faux amis* (SLO 5.2), apply strategies to avoid interference and misuse of *faux amis* (SLO 5.3), and demonstrate how to integrate this awareness into authentic communication (SLO 5.4). These outcomes ensure that you can recognise pitfalls, use vocabulary accurately, and communicate more effectively in French.

Glossary of Terms



- **Faux amis:** Words that look or sound similar in English and French but have different meanings, often leading to confusion.
- **Interference:** The influence of one language on another, where learners transfer grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation patterns from their first language into the second.
- **Lexical interference:** Errors caused by confusing similar-looking words between languages, such as using *actuellement* to mean “actually” instead of “currently.”
- **Orthographic false friends:** Words with similar spelling in English and French but different meanings, such as *coin* (French: corner, English: money).
- **Phonetic false friends:** Words that sound alike in English and French but differ in meaning, such as *pain* (French: bread, English: suffering).
- **Semantic false friends:** Words that appear identical in both languages but carry different meanings, such as *sensible* (French: sensitive, English: reasonable).
- **Structural interference:** Mistakes that occur when learners apply grammar rules from English to French, such as using *Je suis étudié* instead of *J’ai étudié*.

Concept Check Questions [Series 5]

Objective questions

1. (Linked to SLO 5.1) Which of the following best defines language interference? a) Using two languages at the same time b) Influence of one language on another causing errors c) Learning vocabulary from a dictionary d) Mixing formal and informal speech
2. (Linked to SLO 5.2) The French word *librairie* means: a) library b) bookshop c) bookstore and library together d) reading room
3. (Linked to SLO 5.3) Which of the following is a recommended strategy for mastering *faux amis*? a) Avoid using them altogether b) Create flashcards with correct meanings c) Translate them directly from English d) Ignore their differences
4. (Linked to SLO 5.4) Confidence in communication grows when learners practise in: a) isolated study only b) authentic contexts c) memorisation drills only d) translation exercises only

Short-answer questions

5. (Linked to SLO 5.1) Give one example of structural interference between English and French.
6. (Linked to SLO 5.2) What does the French word *déception* mean in English?
7. (Linked to SLO 5.3) Suggest one practical exercise that helps learners avoid interference and misuse of *faux amis*.
8. (Linked to SLO 5.4) Write a short sentence using the *faux ami actuellement* correctly.



Long-answer questions

9. (Linked to SLO 5.1 and SLO 5.2) Analyse how interference and *faux amis* can affect the accuracy of French communication, giving examples of both.
10. (Linked to SLO 5.3 and SLO 5.4) Evaluate strategies for overcoming interference and *faux amis*, and design a plan for integrating these strategies into everyday spoken and written French.

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 5]

Objective questions

1. b) Influence of one language on another causing errors
2. b) bookshop
3. b) Create flashcards with correct meanings
4. b) authentic contexts

Short-answer questions

5. Example: *Je suis étudié* instead of *J'ai étudié*.
6. *Déception* means “disappointment.”
7. Example: Writing short dialogues that use *faux amis* correctly.
8. *Je travaille actuellement sur un projet important*.

Long-answer questions

9. **Basic response:** Interference occurs when English rules are applied to French, such as incorrect word order (*Je joue football* instead of *Je joue au football*). *Faux amis* mislead learners, e.g. *déception* meaning “disappointment” rather than “deception.” Both can reduce accuracy and cause misunderstanding.

Value-added response: Beyond these examples, interference and *faux amis* affect tone, clarity, and cultural appropriateness. Learners may unintentionally sound rude or unclear. Analysing authentic French texts and conversations helps identify these pitfalls and improve accuracy.

10. **Basic response:** Strategies include comparing structures, using authentic materials, creating flashcards, and practising dialogues. These help learners avoid interference and misuse of *faux amis*.

Value-added response: Outstanding learners can design a structured plan: daily flashcard review, weekly role-play sessions, and regular exposure to French media. They may also track personal errors in a journal, reflect on progress, and seek peer feedback to integrate strategies into both spoken and written communication effectively.

Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 5]



Pilot Questions 5.1

1. Language interference
2. *Je joue au football*
3. Lexical interference
4. Currently
5. Example: Pronouncing the French *r* like the English *r*

Pilot Questions 5.2

1. Words that look or sound similar in English and French but differ in meaning
2. Bookshop
3. Phonetic false friends
4. Sensitive
5. To attend

Pilot Questions 5.3

1. *au*
2. Compare structures, use authentic materials, or keep error lists (any one)
3. Disappointment
4. Flashcards
5. Writing short dialogues or role-playing scenarios

Pilot Questions 5.4

1. *J'ai chaud*
2. Disappointment
3. *Librairie*
4. Authentic contexts
5. Example: Correcting “Je suis étudié” to “J’ai étudié” in written French

References and Attributions [Series 5]

General references

- Course content adapted from *FRE 103: Introduction to French Grammar (2 Units C: LH 30)*.



- Suggested OER repositories for further study:
 - OER Commons (<https://www.oercommons.org>)
 - MERLOT (<https://www.merlot.org>)
 - Open Textbook Library (<https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks>)

Figures

- *Figure 5.1: Language interference between English and French – AI-generated suggestion.* Prompt: “Create a diagram showing English-to-French language interference with examples of grammar and vocabulary transfer.” Suggested OER search string: “OER diagram language interference English French examples.”
- *Figure 5.2: Examples of faux amis between English and French – AI-generated suggestion.* Prompt: “Create a diagram showing French faux amis with correct English meanings, e.g. actuellement, librairie.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French faux amis examples diagram.”
- *Figure 5.3: Practice strategies for accuracy and fluency – AI-generated suggestion.* Prompt: “Create a diagram showing practice strategies for French learners to overcome interference and faux amis.” Suggested OER search string: “OER diagram French practice strategies faux amis interference.”
- *Figure 5.4: Building confidence in authentic communication – AI-generated suggestion.* Prompt: “Create a diagram showing how practising awareness of interference and faux amis builds confidence in French communication.” Suggested OER search string: “OER diagram French communication confidence strategies.”

Tables

- *Table 5.1: Common patterns of English interference in French – AI-generated suggestion.* Prompt: “Generate a table showing examples of English interference in French with corrections.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French English interference examples table.”
- *Table 5.2: Categories of faux amis – AI-generated suggestion.* Prompt: “Generate a table categorising French faux amis into semantic, phonetic, and orthographic types with examples.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French faux amis categories examples table.”
- *Table 5.3: Techniques for recognising and avoiding interference – AI-generated suggestion.* Prompt: “Generate a table showing techniques to recognise and avoid English interference in French.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French learning strategies avoid English interference examples table.”
- *Table 5.4: Examples of applying awareness of interference – AI-generated suggestion.* Prompt: “Generate a table showing examples of English interference in French with corrected forms.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French interference corrected examples table.”

Boxes



- *Box 5.1: Examples of structural and lexical interference* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a text box listing examples of structural and lexical interference between English and French.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French English structural lexical interference examples.”
- *Box 5.2: Common misleading faux amis* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a text box listing common French faux amis with correct meanings and misleading English equivalents.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French common faux amis examples list.”
- *Box 5.3: Methods for mastering faux amis* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a text box listing methods for mastering French faux amis through practice.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French faux amis learning strategies examples.”
- *Box 5.4: Correct usage of selected faux amis* – AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a text box listing French faux amis with correct meanings and sample usage.” Suggested OER search string: “OER French faux amis correct usage examples.”

