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The French Community at URI: A Study of Cultural and Linguistic Identity

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The French Community at URI:

A Study of Cultural and Linguistic Identity

by Kayla Butts
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Introduction

Growing up in a tri-racial family has always brought upon me the question of identity. To which culture do I belong and which values do I adopt? To make matters even more complex, I have fallen in love with the French culture and language and have chosen to major in it. Am I allowed to feel a part of this culture as well?

Whether it is part of ones' ethnic background or not, human beings question if it is possible to truly belong to more than one culture; for some, maintaining multiple cultures may take a lot of work. With this project, I take the question of identity, Francophone identity in particular, and direct it at the faculty and staff of URI who have any sort of connection to Francophone language or culture. It is this exact group of people who make up The French Community at URI, and it is this exact group of people that I chose to interview.

Everyone within the French Community at URI has developed their ties to Francophone language and culture through ethnic background, research interests, and/or personal interests. To give the interviews substance, I based my questions on the articles “Educational Language Planning and Linguistic Identity” by Peter Sutton and “Linguistic Lag as an Ethnic Marker” by Nancy C. Dorian. Using these questions, I am able to see how each individual views his or her own identity with regards to France, if they consider French identity a part of their overall identity, and if they have to work to maintain the cultural and linguistic aspects.

I begin this magazine with an analysis of the two articles and I take into account how the authors view linguistic and cultural identity. I determine how they would hypothetically define a Francophone based on their own studies. After examining their work, I am able to recognize how closely each author relates language and culture.

For the extensive part of my project, I have put together a directory of all the people interviewed. Based on my research and their responses, I have the ability to pinpoint whether it is culture or language that determines identity and, from that, I can identify where cultural and linguistic identity need to intersect in order for someone to call herself/himself Francophone versus Francophile, and I can see the limits that individuals place on their own Francophone or Francophile identity.

The final part of my exploration consists of my own analysis of the link between the theoretical literature and the interviews. I look at how the each author’s view of identity ties into the overall opinions and views of the group. Looking at the similarities between each interview, I define what the terms Francophile and Francophone mean and if there is truly one definition for each. Within this section, it is visible whether culture or language determines identity, and the results will make you curious about the extent of your own.
Theoretical Analysis

The following articles, although they do not touch directly on Francophone identity, were used as the bases for the interview questions and are extremely relevant to the overall view of linguistic and cultural identity:

“Educational Language Planning and Linguistic Identity” by Peter Sutton

Peter Sutton brings about a different approach to the teaching of languages in educational institutions. In his article, he literally maps linguistic identity by focusing on two dimensions in every person: the number of languages that are spoken and the situation in which these languages are spoken. Sutton suggests that there be more tolerance in the recognition of linguistic identity. “If we accept that a language is not an indivisible entity, that bilingualism and multilingualism are becoming increasingly common, and that linguistic diversity should be recognized in planning educational activities, then there are implications for decisions on the role to be accorded to each…” (140). With this passage, Sutton requests that bilingualism and multilingualism be more accepted, as more and more people are being raised in the presence of, or simply learning through interest, several languages. In addition to linguistic tolerance, Sutton puts pressure on the speaker by emphasizing the importance of linguistic expansion. “...A language is what its users make it, and that it is a tool for the expression of its content rather than an abstract set of rules learnt for their own sake” (144). It is up to each individual to take responsibility and practice their chosen language(s), so that they can increase their fluency and expand their knowledge.

Moving on to culture, Sutton relates cultural identity to ethnic and ancestral background. To illustrate his point, he describes a white monolingual English speaking population in Buffalo, NY, who have German, Polish, or Italian ancestry, but have lost the partnering languages as a whole. Due to the fact that minute traces of the lost languages can be heard in their English, they call themselves culturally and ethnically Polish, German, or Italian (135). Here, Sutton brings out the importance of ethnic background with regards to culture.

From Sutton’s views on cultural and linguistic identity, it is inferable that anyone can become a Francophone, as linguistic diversity is very important. It is not that an individual comes from a certain culture, but it is the language(s) that he or she speaks. Going off of these claims, I determine Sutton’s definition of a Francophone to be ‘one who speaks French fluently, looks for instances in which to use the language, and willingly spends time within the given culture.’

“Linguistic Lag as an Ethnic Marker” by Nancy C. Dorian

Nancy C. Dorian discusses the importance of linguistic identity through her studies on the East Sutherland Fisherfolk people in Scotland. Due to the fact that their language is progressing slower than the neighboring communities, it is used as their only form of identification. Because of situations like these, some individual’s feel that language is the “sole marker of ethnic identity” (33), and they speak it as a sign of their uniqueness. “So profound is the connection between language and ethnicity that it is possible to find a people using a language which few of them actually speak as a symbol of their separate ethnic identity” (84). These people see language as the only way of identifying themselves, as it is the only way to keep their culture alive.

Continuing on to cultural identity, Dorian proves that, while language is extremely important, ethnicity and culture can be symbolized in other ways. Although it has diminished, the Fisherfolk people used to be identified by their dress, diet, location, etc. Because this lifestyle is rarely seen among these individuals anymore, they feel that their language is all they have left. Through her research, Dorian goes on to prove that language does not determine identity, but the linguistic lag does. The fact that the Fishfolk’s are so much behind in their speaking abilities allows them to be singled out.

On becoming Francophone, Dorian infers that it is possible, through the following quote: “One Golspie bilingual, now a septuagenarian whose English is fluent, was for years called “That’s-a-dog-of-me” by a local shopkeeper because of the Gaelic-patterned English she mustered as a young girl to claim the dog that the shopkeeper was trying to chase out of his shop” (38). This bilingual woman was constantly picked on, as a young girl, for her lack of fluency in English and now, at the age of 70, she has mastered her speaking. These findings indicate that obtaining the Francophone title would require many years of learning and practicing. With this being the case, I have come to the realization that Dorian might define a Francophone as ‘one who is proficient in the French language, after years of immersion within the culture and/or practice with the language.’

Keeping these articles in mind will make it easier to see how the members of the French Community at URI view their own linguistic and cultural identities, and that, in turn, will broaden the likelihood of coming to a general understanding of the terms Francophone and Francophile.
By being born in France and raised in a Jewish cultural environment, Eliane Aberdam has an influential Franco-Jewish background. Even though she was fully immersed in French society, as she attended school in France until the age of 18, she did not fully realize its uniqueness until she came to the United States. “I started to understand what I was missing when I had to adapt to life in the U.S. Only then did I evaluate and start to appreciate the values of French culture (although not all of it is bright, especially the political scene).” Eliane knows that “it is easy to forget the finesse of the French language,” so she is consistent in speaking it with her family, friends, and peers. Currently, Eliane is a composer and a Professor of Music whose research deals with music composition.

**Views on Identity**

As both a Francophone and a Francophile, Eliane is able to define the terms with ease: one who speaks the language and one who loves the culture. Although she has very strong cultural and linguistic ties to French culture, Eliane does believe that anyone can choose to become a Francophone, as she has witnessed it firsthand. One can fulfill this accomplishment by “marrying a Francophone spouse, reading French literature, [and] writing and talking French.” Looking at her own background, Eliane can acknowledge that cultural and linguistic identity “go hand in hand.” They are equal by the means that one does not determine identity, but they both do. While Eliane is able to maintain her linguistic identity through using the language everyday, she maintains the cultural ties through “family, literature, movies, music, food, and tournure d’esprit.” As a result of the close connections that she keeps with her Francophone culture, Eliane remains conscious of the differences in social awareness, education, and medical care between France and America. On the subject of differences, she finds the two countries opposed with regards to political openness. “Talking politics is not taboo in France, but I feel it is an intrusive topic in standard American conversation, an offensive thing to do. The only times I talk politics around here are with the non-Americans.” The characteristics of Eliane’s identity affect and shape the way she views the world. By working hard and reveling in her ethnicity, Eliane keeps the French culture and language alive within her.
Stephen M. Barber was born in Montreal, Quebec; his mother is German and his father is British. All of his education, up until the university level, has been in bilingual, French and English, schools. His research, as a whole, concerns modernist European literatures and late twentieth century French philosophy. Currently, he is completing a manuscript on the ethics of French philosopher, Michel Foucault, and British novelist, Virginia Woolf. “My research on Michel Foucault relates to French culture in the following way: in order to grasp the originality and context of Foucault’s thought, it is necessary for me to understand French political life of the twentieth century. By ‘political life,’ I mean not only politics as such, but French culture and society as well.” Stephen’s work on Foucault gives him the opportunity to visit Paris where the philosopher’s unpublished writings are archived. As an English professor, Stephen teaches courses on André Gide, Marcel Proust, and Sidonie-Gabrielle Colette.

In Stephen’s opinion, a Francophone is one who knows the French language well and a Francophile is one who admires all things that are French. Based on his own definitions, Stephen considers himself a Francophone, as he knows the language, and believes anyone can become one through lots of study, but he is careful when he uses the term Francophile. “I am wary of self-identifying as a Francophile or as an admirer of any national culture. I prefer ‘cosmopolitanism’ as a way of thinking about national cultures.” Stephen’s studies in comparative literature enable him to have these unique “comparativist” views. With an identity made up of Francophone, German, and English culture, Stephen sees linguistic and cultural identity as being “inextricably connected.” They are indistinguishable from each other, therefore conveying that it takes both to fulfill one’s identity. By taking full advantage of the linguistic and cultural aspects of a civilization, one is able to broaden their academic, as well as personal, perspectives.
Carolyn Betensky became aware of the French language at a very young age, through being born in Canada. Although she knew more French than most of the other kids, she never took the language very seriously. During her last two years of high school, her family moved to Israel where French was the second language of instruction. After high school, Carolyn moved on to college as an English major and ended up switching to French because she wanted to take courses in 20th century literature. After so many years of contact with the language, she finally realized how important it was to her. Carolyn moved on to graduate school at Columbia University where she taught French for 8 years while working towards her PhD in French and comparative literature. Currently, she is under contract with Penguin to translate the novel Les Mystères de Paris (1843) by Eugène Sue, from French to English; this piece of work is “said to be the most widely read novel of the 19th century.” With French as her third language, English is her first and Hebrew is her second, Carolyn has no trouble maintaining any connections. She is completely consumed by her translation work and she speaks with whomever she can. Her impressive background and current research show that she will continue to produce incredible work.

Carolyn, through much involvement with French culture and language, defines a Francophile as “someone who likes French people and things” and a Francophone as someone “who speaks it [French] or the quality of something… it doesn’t have to be a person, something can be Francophone.” Although her linguistic side has declined a bit, Carolyn considers herself both a Francophone and a Francophile. She also thinks that anyone can earn the title of a Francophone as long as they are serious about it. “It [becoming Francophone] takes a lot of hard work and practice! It’s hard to do it in Rhode Island. It’s best to go somewhere where you can immerse yourself in the French language for some extended period of time.” This process may take a while, but it is certainly worth it. When asked how she views the relationship between language and culture with regards to identity, Carolyn states that language and culture can be had, one without the other. “Language has so many different cultures! There are plenty of people who don’t know French…that are so gaga over things French.” Having such stimulating views allows Carolyn to have a broad understanding of the Francophone world. Her optimism and exciting personality show, through her many accomplishments.
Magali Boutiot exercises extreme familiarity with Francophone culture and language through her ethnic background, her research interests, and her personal interests. With regards to her ethnic background, she was born in France, has family in Quebec, and keeps close connections with Francophone friends all over the world, including Africa. While spending 15 years in Canada, Magali obtained a citizenship and, because of this, currently has two nationalities. As for research, Magali is currently working on a book entitled Les Francophones de la Nouvelle Angleterre to help her understand how Francophones from all over the world adapt to the American culture, how they integrate and respond to a different language, and why they choose America. This book is based on interviews that she is conducted herself, in order to satisfy her own personal curiosity. When she is not busy working on her book, Magali expresses her love for the French language through other forms of writing like songs and poems. “J’adore la langue française car elle est raffinée, et la valeur de ses mots ondulent dans un amalgame de variations et d’humeur.” Magali has been recognized for her strong dedication to the French culture by means of several honorable awards; in March of 2011, she was named “Chevalier dans l’Ordre des Palmes Académiques.” Originally founded by the emperor Napoléon, this prestigious award honors those who have made an outstanding contribution to education or culture. Due to her exceptional, numerous achievements, Magali is a role model to all those who want to succeed.

### Views on Identity

With such a broad background, Magali has very particular views of the terms Francophone and Francophile. She characterizes a Francophone as one who comes from a country where “la langue dominante est le français” and a Francophile as someone who has a love for and an interest in the Francophone culture and French language. Since she comes from France, where French is the dominant language, she classifies herself as a Francophone. When asked her opinion on becoming Francophone, she thinks it is possible. “…A lot of immigrants have moved to a French speaking country and then became Francophone, as myself, I became Anglophone, communicating with the English language.” To achieve this goal, it does take years of cultural and linguistic immersion. Moving on, Magali does believe that both language and culture determine identity. A language can define a person’s cultural background, and, especially with the use of accents, let the listener know that they are from a different area or Francophone country. On the other hand, a French person who leaves his or her country for a period of 20 years “will come back with new habits, visions, and ideas that are different from her peers in her native land. [There will be the] same language, but a new transformed mind related to personal experiences.” In this instance, the language stays the same, but the cultural aspects change and let the viewer/listener know that the individual has been in a different cultural environment. With these interesting points of view, Magali will continue to promote Francophone language and culture in the world around her.
Winnie Brownell was born in the United States and, as a young girl, was always surrounded by the French language. Being a French, German, and Geology major, her father constantly spoke French around the house, and it was his influence that sparked her fiery passion for French language and culture. When Winnie received the opportunity to choose a language in high school, she picked French because, for her, it was a relatively familiar language. Currently, as the Dean of Arts and Sciences, Winnie continues to maintain her love of the Francophone culture and believes that “languages are at the heart of humanities.” Everyday, she encourages students to study abroad. With regards to cultural incorporation, Winnie stays busy by cooking French foods, watching French movies and listening to French music. As for linguistic incorporation, she speaks the language at professional receptions and when she takes her occasional trips to France. Even Winnie’s children have inherited her passion for the French culture and language through their careers and hobbies: her daughter-in-law is a violinist and her son, who enjoys watching South Park in French, works for the French company, Schneider. From this, it is visible that her enthusiasm for the French culture and language in contagious.

When asked how she defines the terms Francophone and Francophile, Winnie replied that the former consists of people who speak the French language as well as “people who are apart of the great French diaspora. Globally, where the French colonized around the world (Quebec, Senegal, Haiti)…wherever French had a profound influence”; she claims the latter to be “someone who likes French culture [and] enjoys it.” Seeing as Winnie does not consider herself a fluent speaker, but enjoys the French language and culture, she is a Francophile. If she ever has the time, she will continue to learn the language, in order to improve her speaking abilities. Winnie believes that anyone can become a francophone by moving to a French speaking country and adopting the language and culture as his or her own; that person would, in turn, “become a member of the Francophone World by immigration and not by birth.” Without adopting both the language and culture you cannot have a complete Francophone identity. Language and culture are key to each other as “languages help [us] label our world and navigate through it, so [that] we can fully understand the culture…they are inextricably intertwined.” Through focusing on and learning about the strong ties between culture and language, Winnie will only improve her French and continue to impress those around her.
Karen de Bruin was born in Johannesburg, South Africa to an Afrikaner family. She is predominately Dutch, but she also has some French Huguenot heritage resulting from “when Louis XIV expelled the Huguenots from France in the 17th century.” In her early childhood, Karen moved to England, and it was there where she started learning French, her third language after Afrikaans and English. When Karen moved to the United States, she continued taking French and very quickly, “[her] love for the language and culture grew to the point that [she] chose to return to Europe to live in France for a number of years.” Even though her family moved from country to country and she was never able to develop a full sense of belonging, Karen feels “the most physically ‘chez moi’” in France. Because of the passion she has for Francophone culture and language, she has made it her profession. Karen is a French professor and section head at URI, and her research deals with French women’s literature of the early 19th century; she is currently doing work on Germaine de Staël, a Swiss-French author who explored many genres, especially that of romanticism. Aside from this topic, she is also interested in French abolitionist literature of the 18th and 19th centuries.

Karen’s definition of a Francophile is “someone who loves all things French” and her idea of a Francophone is “someone who speaks French fluently enough to be considered a ‘native speaker,’ whether it is his/her first, second or third language.” According to her own views, Karen believes that it is possible for one to “self-identify” as a Francophone, even if not raised in a Francophone country or family, after he or she has achieved a near-native fluency in the language and has adopted the culture. When asked if she considers herself a Francophone or a Francophile, it was very hard for her to answer, as she considers herself a “third culture kid.” She continues by explaining that, according to the US Department of State, a third culture kid is one who has spent many years of their childhood in a foreign country and does not experience a sense of belonging to their “passport country” when they return. Also, the adaptation that they have made to the foreign country causes them to miss out on learning the ways of their own country. Because of this, the child feels more “at home in the ‘third-culture,’ which they have created.” This example is only a minute representation of the anxiety that Karen feels towards her true identity. Even though she relates very closely to the French language and culture, she feels more attached to her South African identity. “Linguistically, I feel the most ‘at home’ when I hear Afrikaans…I consider myself more culturally South African than French.” As she will never part with her deep Afrikaner roots, French will always remain with her through adoption.
When encountered with the question of Francophone and Francophile identity, Peter finds that a Francophone is someone who speaks the language, whereas a Francophile is someone who has an attraction to the French culture. Peter feels a connection to both entities: “I speak French fluently, but I also feel French. I prefer French food to most other cuisines, I love French antiques, I love and listen to French music.” Peter’s broad perspectives enforce his beliefs that anyone can become Francophone, if they so choose, and he uses his mother as an example. “She was gifted for language and loved French...She went to France in college and immersed herself in the language and culture.” Although it may take hard work and time, he deems it very possible to take this route and succeed. Peter is able to link his own cultural and linguistic identity straight to the French culture and he points out that there is a relation between the two. “The idioms of a language link the language to the culture. These are the little things that one doesn’t generally learn in a course or book and the ones that one does learn tend to be clichéd, not the real cultural stuff.” Although the two are strongly tied, as it is not possible to have one without the other, culture has a stronger influence over linguistics and therefore takes the lead in the determining identity. The combination of Peter’s linguistic and cultural background shapes his life and his views on this very complicated subject.
About

Professor and Director of music, Ann Danis, grew up in a French-speaking household. The lineage on her mother’s side of the family can be tied back to late 1500s France and her grandmother, on her father’s side, is from Canada. It was because of her grandmother that she began speaking French before English. “She really wanted me to be just French, and I had no problem with that...I always thought it was a beautiful language. I still think it’s an extraordinary language.” Ann’s extreme interest in the French language paved the way for her first trip to France, a birthday present to herself, in 1997. This trip impacted her life so much that she decided to rent, and then buy, a house in the country so that she can visit whenever she wants.

Views on Identity

Through learning about and loving the French culture, Ann considers herself a Francophile; by speaking the language and by associating herself with French culture more than with Canadian culture or American culture, she is also able to identify herself as a Francophone. “I identify more with the [French] culture than with American culture, like with the way they educate, the way they raise their children, the way they do what they do.” These views allow Ann to live with the understanding of what it is like to be in France. She has adopted the customs of eating healthier, going to the market everyday to obtain fresh groceries, drinking good wine, and having the patience to appreciate everything around her. Because Ann brings this unique way of life with her every time she returns to the United States, she feels that she does not have to work to maintain her cultural or linguistic identity. When asked about her views on the two forms of identity, Ann responds, with much sadness, that they can be separated. “People like diplomats...speak the language, but they don’t try to really understand enough about the culture.” Culture and language should be tied together, but that is not always the case. Those who do not connect with France on a cultural level will be oblivious of its aesthetic capabilities. “For example, when you buy something they [French people] always have to wrap it for you, its got to be wrapped and its got to be [in] a beautiful package; it can be a fish head, but it has got to be done artistically.” Ann appreciates these simple, yet meaningful, tendencies within the French culture and she believes it is at this level where one becomes a true Francophone.
With his dad having been stationed in Paris, France during the Korean War, Lars Erickson was introduced to French culture at an early age through interesting stories. Because of his father’s experiences in the country, Lars decided to take French in high school. Although he developed quite a fondness for the language, it was not until he graduated and spent a year in some French speaking parts of Switzerland that his interests really blossomed; he stayed as an au pair with a family and received French lessons as part of his pay. “That’s really when I started to like speaking French, improving in the language, and experiencing different cultures.” This exhilarating journey drove Lars to continue his studies with the Francophone language and culture and become a professor of French. Through working in such a diverse environment, Lars never has trouble finding someone with whom to speak the language. As for cultural practices, he tries to exercise some aspects of the French lifestyle through his eating habits, reading French newspapers and literature, and watching French films. The expansive amount of knowledge that he has attained over the years allows Lars to find creative ways to keep his students engaged.

Based on his definitions of Francophone, a French speaker, and Francophile, someone who likes France, French culture, and possibly the language, Lars identifies himself as both. “I am definitely a Francophile for sure; I really like French culture, I like French food, just everything about France pretty much. I have spent a lot of my life really studying the French language, so I am a Francophone as well.” Having done so himself, Lars thinks it is entirely possible for one to become a Francophone “through learning the language [and] getting to the point where you can speak it well.” Although this accomplishment is achievable, it does take lots of time and effort to become fully fluent in the language. When stating his views on linguistic and cultural identity, Lars finds that the two can be separated. He elucidates his point with an example of Breton, a diminishing Celtic language spoken in Brittany, France. “…You can have an ethnic identity without language being apart of it. Some people still consider themselves Bretons, [even though] very few of them speak the language… they still feel like they have that cultural identity.” This specific illustration indicates that one does not need a language to maintain their ethnic, or cultural, background. On the contrary, even though it is possible for linguistics and culture to be pulled apart, Lars feels that this is not the case with French. To his students, he emphasizes the duality of language and culture, in order to see France, and other Francophone countries, for their extreme beauty.
About

Catherine Gagnon became very interested in the French culture when she was just a little girl. She used to watch reruns of Julia Child’s cooking and found anything that was said about France extremely interesting; because of this, she felt an enthusiasm to learn the French language and experience the culture. Over the years, she has enjoyed the various parts of France, including living in Provence during summer breaks. The cultural aspects have made such an impact on her life that she tends to seek similar experiences when away from France. “I love French food and music (popular and classical) and found many friends here in the U.S. with similar tastes.” Catherine keeps French in her everyday life and, in being French-Canadian (on her mother’s side), has come to “adopt many French culinary practices in [her] own cooking.” After much immersion into the culture, Catherine has come to love how “…parents seem more invested in their children and treat them as children and the very civil and slow manner in which meals and social gatherings are paced.” Characteristics like these are the reason why Catherine tries to incorporate the French way of life into her own style of living here in the United States.

Views on Identity

Although Catherine has not given the concepts much thought, she identifies a Francophile as “being someone more intrigued by and invested in the language, culture and traditions of France—but not obsessed with sentence structure, correct articles, and absolute pronunciation—and seeking an all-encompassing French experience.” A Francophone is “someone more particular about the language itself, for the sake of knowing and being fluent in the language and existing on the periphery of real French life when given the opportunity for emersion.” According to these definitions, Catherine classifies herself as a Francophile. When asked her opinion on the possibility of becoming a Francophone she replies with mixed feelings. There are people who study the language for years and still manage to sound “so incredibly silly when trying to speak in French.” Then, there are people who gain success with the language over time and they “find a way to become part of a French community.” Everything really depends on the person’s situation and their ability to obtain fluency in the language and knowledge of the culture. With regards to the connection between language and culture, Catherine has strong views. She finds that one cannot have language without culture because “language is a very large part of culture.” Going to France will not be as enjoyable if there is a lack of communication with the people living in that community. If one does not experience the music of the language, one will not see the beauty of the culture. In all, Catherine has obtained a wealth of knowledge through her travels and she strives to increase it every day.
About

Coming from a French background, Norly grew up in Haiti where French is one of the two official languages, besides Creole. Receiving all of his education in French, especially a B.A. and M.A. in Industrial Engineering, Norly is now working to obtain his Ph.D. at the University of Metz in France; he is affiliated with URI as a Visiting Research Scholar. “The goal of his work is to propose a system of healthcare infrastructure for Haiti to reduce infant and maternal mortality rates, which are the highest in the western hemisphere.” With French as his second language, Norly uses it in his everyday life and does not have to work hard to maintain it.

Views on Identity

When asked to define the difference between a Francophile and a Francophone, Norly replied that the former is associated with people who love French, and the latter is tied to a French speaking country or French-speaking people. Using these two definitions, Norly is better equipped to describe himself and his own situation: “As I am from a French speaking country, I am naturally a Francophone.” While Norly relates being Francophone to the French culture, he does think it is possible for anyone to become Francophone, whether there are cultural ties or not, as long as the person puts the work in. “If you learn French and its culture you can become a Francophone. You need to create a great relationship with a French speaking country to know about their culture and their people.” It is these people, who come to the language through reasons other than cultural and linguistic background, that have to work to maintain the linguistic identity because it is a developing part of them. These views allow Norly to determine that cultural and linguistic identities are closely related to each other. He maintains the belief that cultural identity consists of the small nuances and other things that connect one to a given country, like “the jokes that make you laugh to death while foreigners might find them not so amazing; foods; music; arts; etc.,” and that linguistic identity is solely the language that a given culture speaks. While the two types of identities may appear to be similar, cultural identity cannot be reached by any other means than through linguistic identity. “You can have linguistic without cultural identity but you cannot have cultural identity without the linguistic. The linguistic [identity] helps you to get the cultural identity.” Cultural identity cannot stand alone, while linguistic identity can. These unique considerations and perspectives are a result of Norly’s diverse background, which allows him to look through multiple lenses in order to shape his own Francophone identity.
About Views on Identity

It was not until high school that JoAnn Hammadou-Sullivan had her first encounter with the French language; seeing as she loved to travel, she knew French would be the perfect choice. During these four years, JoAnn grew very fond of the language and the summer after completing high school, she took the next step and went to France. “That’s when I grew in love with it [French], I’ve been in love with the French culture ever since.” JoAnn’s passion for Francophone language and culture led her to pursue it as a career; as a French professor at URI, she teaches courses dealing with, but not limited to, grammar, history, and literature. Aside from speaking the language on a day-to-day basis at work, she uses the language to send emails to her French friends and also when she is abroad in France. Although JoAnn admits that she has to work to maintain the language, because “if you don’t use it, you lose it,” she is at an advantage thanks to her useful professional surroundings.

Through being extremely well versed in French language and culture, JoAnn has developed her own definitions of the term Francophone and Francophile. She presumes that a Francophone includes anyone who speaks the French language, even the former French colonies that are fluent in the language, but detest France. She sees a Francophile as one who likes Francophone culture, especially within the “French speaking parts of the world besides France.” JoAnn deems herself both a Francophone and a Francophile because she speaks the language, as well as appreciates the culture. Based on her own progress in the field of French studies, JoAnn believes it is possible for one to become a Francophone, as he or she is not born into it, but the process takes many years of study and immersion. Even though she is able to speak French and knows a lot about the culture, she does not classify herself, in any way, as having a French identity. “I am an Anglophone who speaks French. I speak a language that I really love but I don’t fully adopt that as a key component of my identity, because I don’t have the cultural identity. Maybe [you] do need them both to fully identify.” JoAnn finds that, if one wants to truly be a part of any Francophone community, he or she needs to have both the language and the culture. Through her upbeat teaching style, JoAnn gives every student the opportunity to develop a fascination for Francophone culture and a strong understanding of the French language.
Céline Jacquenod-Garcia was born and raised in Perpignan, located in the very South of France, not far from Barcelona. She grew up using French as her first and primary language, and she did not come to the United States until about 10 years ago. Upon moving here, Céline experienced the difference between the two cultures and realized that it would not be easy to adapt. To this day, she still does not feel fully comfortable with the American culture and language, as French is a part of her, it is her way of thinking, and she misses the everyday physical contact, like cheek kissing, and the relaxing way of life. In order to keep the French culture incorporated into her life, Céline watches French television, listens to French music, and keeps a French calendar to stay aware of the special holidays celebrated within her native country, for example, our Independence Day (4th of July) v. Bastille Day in France (14th of July). Although Céline does not feel fully up-to-date with the French language, because she is not in France to keep up with the latest slang (which makes up 60-70% of a conversation), she maintains her fluency by speaking with her students, her colleagues, her family, and whoever else she can find. As for travels, Céline visits France a lot because most of her family lives there. She tries to keep her trips to every two years but she treated herself twice this past year for a few special occasions. Even though she is currently living in a country whose values are so different from her own, Céline will never lose her strong connection to the French language and culture, no matter how many obstacles are put in her way.

Céline defines the term Francophone in two ways: a person who “speaks the [French] language or a person who lives in a country influenced by the language and culture.” Based on this definition, she considers herself a Francophone in the former sense because she speaks French, but not in the latter sense because she is not currently living in a Francophone country. Céline could not give her own definition of the term Francophile because she has never heard the term used before. When asked whether it is culture or language that determines identity, she replied, “I think it’s both of them because how you speak is affected by your culture.” Being a fluent speaker versus expressing the culture through the language, especially with the use of slang, are two different concepts. “You convey your culture through your language and the language is a reflection of your culture.” If one does not master the cultural context and expressions of a native speaker, then he or she can be easily identified and picked out as having the language without the culture. With this said, Céline works hard each day, influencing others to love and have a passion for the French language and culture that she grew up with.
Galen Johnson came about the French language in 1984 when he was invited to Paris for his first sabbatical; French philosopher Paul Ricoeur invited him to the Centre Nationale de Recherche Scientifique (CNRS). Due to the nature of this trip, Galen realized that he would have to learn to speak French. Ever since this educational experience, he has been working on his level of fluency and his familiarity with the culture. Galen’s current research is on recent French philosophy, especially contemporary French aesthetics. “There’s one particular French philosopher that I’ve gotten hooked on and can’t stop writing about; I’ve done four books on him and have two more in process. His name is Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961).” Aside from research interests, Galen maintains a personal enthusiasm for the culture as well. He has lived in France for extended periods of time and visits the country as often as possible. For fun, Galen engages himself in French art, listens to French music, and indulges in French wines and cheeses.

Galen considers himself a “big Francophile and somewhat Francophone,” based on his rendition of the two terms. He defines Francophile as a person who loves the language and a Francophone as someone who speaks the language. While it is possible for one to become a Francophone, Galen finds that complete possible fluency only happens in extremely rare cases. “I do know one individual whom I think accomplished it after 10 years or so of living in Paris, and another who is well on her way.” He also notes a few “rare and very admirable cases” where writers Samuel Beckett and Milan Kundera cross over from their native language into the French language by writing their books in French. On the more pessimistic side, Galen mentions how his research philosopher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “contends that it is only possible to really live in one’s mother tongue due to affective qualities of a foreign language that are sedimented in speech and bodily gestures impossible to acquire as a foreigner.” Bringing in different perspectives allows him to see that his own conclusions are much more positive. On the subject of linguistic and cultural identities, Galen perceives the two to be very interrelated. “I’m a reader and it is difficult for me to imagine having a cultural identity without it being also linguistic.” While there may be situations in which the two are separate, he has never experienced an entirely oral culture. Galen takes pride in his understanding of the French language and will continue to preserve his love for the Francophone culture.
Roger Lebrun, professor of Life Sciences, was raised in a French-speaking household and did not speak English until he was 12 years old. He prides himself in the fact that he is 100% French and it is in France where he feels at home: to date, he has been there 32 times. One of Roger’s great grandfathers, Charles LeBrun, actually made a huge impact on 17th century art. He designed Versailles, he invented the process of drawing animal faces on people in order to depict the physiognomy theory, and he started the Gobelins tapestry school in Paris. With such an interesting ancestry, Roger is very loyal to his Francophone identity. “I do the best I can to continue the language and to promote the quality of the language…and the literature.” To embrace the language and culture even more, Roger indulges in French philosophy, uses his culinary degree to make French cuisine, and takes French-style photographs.

Roger defines a Francophone as someone who speaks French and a Francophile as someone who loves French. When asked how he defines himself, he responds, “I am French! I speak French, culturally I’m French, and I’m a Francophile, I love France.” Roger then describes the large range of options between the terms Francophone and Francophile. “You can be one or both…I know people who speak perfect French and hate all things French (including themselves)...others that know French art, history, culture, and can’t speak a word of French…then, of course, [there are] other people who are both Francophone and Francophile to an extreme degree.” With such a broad gap between the two terms, how are they to be classified? On becoming Francophone, Roger states that it can be done “quite eloquently. Just study with the best teachers, travel, and absorb the culture. It doesn’t have to be in a classroom.” One can become a Francophile very easily through love of the language and culture. With regards to linguistic and cultural identity, Roger believes that one identifies the other. Language must be present within the culture because language determines culture. With such a strong French identity, Roger carries both the language and the culture with him everyday because they are, in fact, a part of him.
Richard McIntyre developed his enthusiasm for the French language and culture through personal and professional interests. By teaching and writing about international comparative politics and economics, Richard finds it very helpful to be able to read in other languages, as it helps him look at the U.S. through the perspectives of different cultures. He came to a point in his life where he felt it necessary to begin learning a new language or to revisit one of the languages that he had learned previously. Richard chose the latter and he then began working on his development in the French language. As a result of his profession in international economics, Richard has had the chance to travel to France several times and he has been able to stay in touch with the culture.

**About**

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**Views on Identity**

Based on his own knowledge and perceptions of French language and culture, Richard associates himself with the term Francophile. “[A] Francophile is somebody interested in things French and a Francophone is somebody who speaks the language... I’m on the Francophile side.” Although he does not identify himself as a Francophone, because he only speaks the language “un petit peu,” he does think it is possible for anyone to become Francophone if they spend about 10 years in a French speaking country. One can only gain true fluency through years of “living it [the language] and speaking it everyday.” Richard does not consider France a direct part of his identity due to his strong Irish ethnicity. “When I go to Ireland I feel very much at home...when I go to France it’s a very interesting place, I love to go there, [but] I’m not necessarily at home there.” Even though Richard’s personality is not characterized by a French background, he is able to see a link between the cultural and linguistic aspects of the Francophone countries. “We think in a language and, certainly, the ability to communicate with other people is critical to having a shared culture, but I don’t think they are exactly the same thing.” In all, both linguistics and culture make up one’s identity and the linguistic aspects are needed to define the many factors of cultural identification.
Joseph Morello, a French Professor here at URI, began his relationship with the French culture at a young age. He took French in high school because it happened to be the only language offered. “I didn’t have a choice, it was the only language available.” Joe originally went to college to become a math teacher, but it did not work out; as a result of the birth of language requirements in the early 1960’s, he chose to obtain a degree in French and become a French professor. “I got caught up in the whole thing and ended up doing my under graduate degree. I was the first French major graduate from my little state teacher’s college in Pennsylvania.” Today, Joe maintains a professional interest in the French language and culture and keeps it in his life through his teaching, watching French television (TV5), and reading French literature, magazines, and newspapers.

How does Joe classify himself with regards to the terms Francophone and Francophile? “I am a Francophone to the extent that I can speak French, but I don’t classify myself as a Francophone because, as I understand the definition of “Francophone”, French has to be your native language or an official language of the country where you grew up.” The latter part of his statement is the reason why he does not identify himself as a Francophone; he does not use the language as a means of daily communication. Joe’s particular views lead him to say that it is only possible to become a Francophone by exercising these characteristics: daily cultural immersion and use of the language. His knowledge of French language and culture shows him that it is not possible to have one without the other. Joe believes that linguistic community forms cultural identity; “language and culture are so intermingled that it is almost impossible to separate them.” Although Joseph does not have a French identity, he considers himself a Francophile, somebody who loves France and French culture.
About

Amy Porter was first introduced to the French language in the 4th grade. Learning it at such a young age allowed her to grow and love the language as she became more familiar with it. In having parents who enjoyed traveling (they spent a month in Europe each summer), she had her first trip to France when she was in 8th grade. After being so immersed in the language and culture, she decided that she wanted to further her knowledge and obtain a degree in foreign language. “I knew that I wanted to pursue languages, especially French, so I applied early (and was accepted) to Middlebury College.” As a French major, Amy was given the opportunity to study abroad in France and she took it; this trip made her passion for the language and culture even stronger. “Mastering a language is incredibly satisfying, but it is equally satisfying to understand the cultural differences of a foreign country and learn to assimilate into that culture.” Today, Amy keeps her French fascination alive by traveling to France, watching French films, and by corresponding with friends who live in France.

Views on Identity

In her own opinion, Amy denotes the term Francophone as “someone or something that is naturally part of the French culture/nationality (i.e. a territory or former colony)” whereas the term Francophile “pertains to someone who aspires to be part of the French culture.” According to these unique characterizations, Amy considers herself to be a Francophile because of her love for the language and culture and because the fact that she is not “naturally French.” She claims that, while anyone can become a Francophile, it is not possible to become a Francophone unless one has cultural and/or ethnic ties. Amy holds much love for the French culture and way of life, but she does not identify herself as “French” in any way. “I am an American who has a good understanding of France, its language and [its] culture.” When confronted with the question of linguistic and cultural identities and their tie to one’s overall identity, Amy feels that they go hand in hand. “...I’m not sure you can have one without the other. My husband is English and I have watched his assimilation into the American culture. He has had to change his use of words in some situations in order to be understood here. Small linguistic nuances, in any language, are tied to culture – humor, for instance.”

Using her husband as an example, Amy sees how indistinguishable culture and language truly are. Because of her experiences with the culture and language of Francophone society, Amy has developed these interesting points of view. She plans on taking more trips to France in the years to come.
Born in the United States, Kenneth Rogers found the French language through research interests; he was originally intrigued by French literature, but now, he is even more fascinated with the history of the French language. His research relates directly to the French culture “through the language and through the attitudes that the French people have towards their language.” As a French professor, Kenneth is always able to use his knowledge of the French language and culture as he communicates in French daily with students and faculty members. When not at school, he watches French television (TV5) and, also, both him and his wife indulge themselves in a variety of French literature; they have a “growing library of French books on all kinds of subjects.” With his son currently living in France and his wife’s relatives and father being from France, he has plenty of opportunities to travel and stay immersed in the culture. Throughout his career, he has had the chance to do three yearlong sabbaticals! After much time spent learning and gaining experience, Kenneth has mastered the language and is now passing his knowledge on to current and soon-to-be Francophiles and Francophones.

Views on Identity

When confronted with the question on how to define the terms Francophone and Francophile, Kenneth claims that a francophone is someone who speaks the French language, and a Francophile is someone “who loves the language and loves the country.” Kenneth believes you can be both Francophile and Francophone or simply one or the other; he sees himself as a Francophone. “I speak French, I like to speak French and like to hear it spoken and [I also like to] talk to people who speak it.” While it is very easy to become a Francophile, as one does not need to speak the language in order to love all things French, becoming a Francophone takes much time and effort, but Kenneth does deem it possible, as long as one learns the French language and speaks it well. One the subject of culture and language, Kenneth brings up a strong point: one does not have to speak a certain language to love and identify themselves as part of a given country. He believes that one can have language without cultural identity and vice versa. To illustrate his point, he explains how Ireland once had its own language, but it has long since been virtually dead. The Irish still consider themselves Irish even without their own language. On the opposing side, Kenneth gives an example of certain situations where culture and linguistics cannot be separated, specifically in Quebec. The Québécois have an intimate relationship with their language and they feel as though it determines their identity. Each individual must maintain the language, as it is used almost everywhere: in everyday communication, in educational institutions, in governmental affairs, etc. Kenneth feels very strongly about his work in the field of French culture and language, and he will never stop learning and making an impact on those around him.
Joëlle Rollo-Koster was born in France, on the Mediterranean coast, in the small town of Ollioules. She went to school Toulon and got a masters degree at the university of Nice. After these outstanding academic accomplishments, she decided to take the next step and come to the United States, where she acquired another master’s degree along with a PhD. With French being her first language, in which she is “utterly fluent,” Joëlle does not have to work too hard to maintain her linguistic identity. Her mother and other close relatives still live in France and she communicates with them everyday over Skype; she even speaks the language at home with her family. Joëlle keeps the French culture with her in the way she acts, thinks, and lives her day-to-day life. She “watches French TV every night, specifically the news, [her] political thinking is French, and [her] diet is French.” Going along with her prominent lifestyle, Joëlle puts much emphasis on how the French way of thinking is so different from the American way of thinking. “I was raised to be critical of everything and to question everything, where people here are trained differently. People here are trained to listen and to not ask questions.” Joëlle then gives an example of René Descartes and how he questioned everything. Because of her unique upbringing, Joëlle is not afraid to voice her opinion and “say it like it is.”

Joëlle distinguishes a Francophone as someone “who speaks French and who does not automatically like French people and culture” and she believes a Francophile to be someone “who likes the French culture but does not automatically speak French.” Joëlle considers herself to be both: a Francophile because she loves the culture and the language and a Francophone because it is her culture, it is her essence, and it is who she is. When asked about the possibility of someone becoming a Francophone, she thinks it is definitely achievable “if you study the language and then go and live in the country and adopt the culture.”

With that being said, Joëlle claims that cultural and linguistic identity cannot be separated. “Without speaking the language, you will never have the cultural identity... If you speak the language and are not French, you are not considered French. You need to have lived in the country [and you need] to have an understanding of the culture.” In the first half of her statement, Joëlle finds that one cannot have a culture without language, and, in the second half, she determines that one cannot have a language without culture. Based on these conclusions, linguistics and culture must intersect equally for one to call himself/herself a Francophone. These interesting considerations emphasize how Joëlle sustains a French mentality and lifestyle. She treasures her passion for history and French culture everyday, never forgetting who she is or where she came from.
About

It was not until Professor Lawrence Rothstein traveled to France, learned the language, tasted the food, and formed memories with the people that he became truly interested in the culture. His experiences with the country led him to include France in his research. At the time, he was doing comparative work on the politics around [steel manufacturing] plant closings. These closings were happening in both the United States and France, and Larry was able to study the responses that he obtained from French and American steelworkers. Although he does not describe himself as having a strictly French identity, Larry looks for ways to include the language and culture into his day-to-day activities.

Views on Identity

When asked how he distinguishes the nature of French identity, he states that one is “Francophone in the sense of being able to speak French and [by] possibly being a part of that community...Francophile is somebody who likes that culture and certain aspects of it but may not necessarily be able to speak French.” Larry sees himself as a Francophone, with some restrictions, and as a Francophile; He only feels Francophone when he is in France, but he never overlooks his interests in the culture, geography, history, politics, and language. Just as Larry is very particular about himself with regards to the term Francophone, he believes others can only obtain this title by being immersed (and actually living) in the culture. “If they can speak the language well enough to be identified with and live in a Francophone culture,” they can then classify themselves as Francophone. With his strong views on identity, Larry is able to pinpoint relations between language and culture and how they shape one’s character. “Certainly they are closely related and important...I think your first identity, the one you’ve been raised in, is going to have some stronger influences; that can change over years of being in another culture.” The combination of loyalty to his American identity and his interests in the French language/culture, allow him to see the world differently. He determines that linguistics and culture both determine identity because it is his broad background within these two aspects that shape his knowledge and perspectives.
About

Pamela Warner was first introduced to French in middle school when she was required to take a language; the German teacher was very mean, the Spanish teacher was extremely hard, so French it was! As she progressed in the courses, she was surprised at how easy it was to pick up the language, and she made the decision to never let it go. While working to obtain her B.A. in French at the University of Michigan, Pamela spent a year in France and became even more attached to the language, as well as the culture. Today, she is always immersed in a French atmosphere through her husband who comes from a Swiss-French background; they speak French at home every day and spend five months of the year in Paris. As a professor of Art History, she is constantly doing research on French subjects and publishing articles in French. With such an interesting lifestyle, Pamela never fails to improve her fluency as she is surrounded by the language all the time.

Views on Identity

To Pamela, a Francophone is someone “qui est né dans un pays où la langue maternelle est le français ou des jeunes qui sont nés dans des anciennes colonies françaises, en Afrique (Sénégal, Algérie, Tunisie) ou dans les Caraïbes.” She continues on to say that a Francophile “n’est pas français, mais aime la France: la culture, l’art, la nourriture, la langue, la musique, et le pays.” Pamela considers herself a former Francophile because she does not have an absolute love for France anymore; she is now able to see it for all its complexity, the good and the bad. She finds that Francophiles tend to be a bit cliché in the way they only see the good aspects of France and, by having a more critical view, she is being fair to both sides. Based on her definition of the term Francophone, Pamela does not find it possible for someone to attain this title. “I don’t think anyone can become Francophone who is not born into a French-speaking situation, because there is something so powerful about the mother tongue that it can never be duplicated by someone who acquires French as a second language, even if they get completely “fluent” by traditional standards. It will always be an other language.” Pamela advances her views on the relationship between language and culture by claiming that the two cannot be separated. For her, language is “à la base de la culture” and one cannot speak a language without expressing culture. She gives an example of how those who have French lineage, but do not speak the language, are not French. Linguistic expression is a crucial part of a culture and, therefore, the two build on each other. Even though she does not have a Francophone identity, Pamela will always maintain her ability to speak French while simultaneously broadening her knowledge of the culture.
English professor Travis Williams came to the French language and culture through research and personal interests. His academic explorations are mainly focused on the literature and culture of the British Renaissance, but he has found a way to tie in the French culture as well. “Every aspect of British art, politics, learning, and economics was touched by activity in France. France also served as a major conduit for activity in Italy and its influence on Britain.” Travis’ research gives him the opportunity to indulge in French literature and, on two occasions, has allowed him to travel to France. While he is not French by descent, he refuses to let the culture and language escape his identity. “I consider myself to be American culturally...French/Francophone culture is part of my identity because I choose to include it.” To keep his cultural and linguistic connections, he speaks French with friends and acquaintances, and he reads French frequently.

Travis characterizes himself as a Francophile, and not a Francophone, based on his own interpretation of the two terms. “A Francophone exhibits extensive abilities with the French language. A Francophile admires and enjoys many aspects of French culture, whether or not s/he knows the language.” Travis links the term Francophone to being very proficient and fluent in the language. Anyone can become a Francophone, but it takes a lot of study and practice. Travis’ observations of the French culture have helped him develop the view that language and culture are closely connected; in fact, they are one in the same. When asked for his views on the relationship between cultural and linguistic identity, he replied, “They are indistinguishable. The fact that I have studied and know French, and I don’t hide those facts, determines part of my identity, and affects how other people decide what they think my identity is.” Cultural identity cannot be discerned from linguistic identity, which proves that the two of them combined make up an individual’s overall identity.
After being confronted by so many different perspectives, it is necessary to break everything down and find the commonalities that will enable us to define the terms Francophile and, more importantly, Francophone. To do this, we must confide in a dictionary, revisit the articles mentioned earlier, “Educational Language Planning and Linguistic Identity” by Peter Sutton and “Linguistic Lag as an Ethnic Marker” by Nancy C. Dorian, and, finally, compare these three contextual sources with the interviewee’s own opinions.

Seeing as Sutton and Dorian do not directly address the concepts surrounding the word Francophile, it can only be defined using the dictionary and interviewee responses. As stated in the Merriam Webster dictionary, a Francophile is one who is “markedly friendly to France or French culture.” While this terminology may seem correct, it is surprisingly weak. A few of the individual’s interviewed claim a Francophile to be one who “likes” the culture and language, which is notably similar to being “markedly friendly” to the same subject. The rest, and also the majority, of the interviewee’s proclaim that there is a stronger relationship between the word and its meaning than one may think. When asked to define “Francophile,” I received responses that were filled with passion: “one who loves the culture,” “admires all things French,” “has a love for and an interest in,” “has an attraction to,” “intrigued by and invested in,” “aspires to be part of.” What does it mean that all these words of beauty and emotion are used to describe the feelings that one may have towards the French culture? Based on these reactions, it is inferable that a Francophile is not just one who is friendly towards French culture, but that they have a connection with and a passion for Francophone culture and language.

With a plausible definition of Francophile, it is now time to move to the more difficult term: Francophone. After compiling and analyzing the definitions given by each individual, it is determined that word can be interpreted in three ways, focusing on 1) language and culture, 2) culture, or 3) language. The first group, also the minority group, who base their views of a Francophone on both language and culture, had definitions like, one who “speaks the language and identifies with French culture” and “someone who speaks French as a first or official language.” These opinions are very similar to the illustration given by the Merriam Webster Dictionary, which claims that a Francophone is “of, having, or belonging to a population using French as its first or sometimes second language.” All of these definitions claim that the individual must be familiar with the French language and be part of, or identify with, Francophone culture.

The next group, very close in number to that of the first, relates the term Francophone directly to culture. Some examples of this are: a Francophone is “one who comes from a country where French is the dominant language” and “someone born in a country where French is the maternal language.” All of these definitions raise the question of language. If someone is a Francophone merely because of the country they were born in, or came from, must they speak the lan-
language too? Is it just their ethnicity and/or cultural background that matter?

Finally, the last group, and also the majority, ties the term Francophone directly to language. The definitions are quite similar, but here are a few examples: one who “knows French well,” “one who speaks the language,” “French speaking people,” and one who “exhibits extensive abilities with the French language.” Based on the hypothetical definitions of Sutton and Dorian given earlier, the two authors would most likely belong to this group. All of these perspectives infer that, in order to classify oneself as a Francophone, an individual must be well learned in the language, speak the language, and THEN immerse him or herself in the culture.

Now that definitions have been formed for the basic terminology, it is easier to examine the concepts of culture and language to see how they shape one’s identity as a whole. Most of the interviewees claimed that both language and culture are determinants of identity, as you cannot have one without the other. Some responses to prove this are “both language and culture determine identity,” “they are inextricably connected,” and “you cannot take the culture out of the language or the language out of the culture.” In order to have a complete overall identity, both language and culture have to be present and, while the two must intersect, the point at which they do is up to each individual. For example, both Sutton and Dorian emphasize the partnership of language and culture, but they find more importance in language and in the broadening of one’s linguistic capabilities. As with their inferred definitions of Francophone and the possibility of becoming one, language is the key to becoming part of a culture. Although one must spend time being immersed in the culture, that person will not gain the prized ‘Francophone’ title until he or she has reached an appropriate level of fluency.

From these potential claims, the difference between one’s overall identity and one’s Francophone identity is visible. Language itself determines Francophone identity because it is only one entity, among the many, that make up a person’s ‘whole’ identity. Not surprisingly, overall, or ‘whole’, identity is much more complex; it must be determined by both language and culture because, today, people speak many languages and are familiar with various cultures. With the combination of language and culture, one can categorize and distinguish his or her ethnicities, to be able to use them, and pull at them, as he or she pleases. This being said, I have an equal place in my heart for my Caucasian side, for my Native American side, for my African American side, and the corresponding languages and modes of communication for each.

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1 A Francophile is one who speaks French fluently, looks for instances in which to use the language, and willingly spends time within the given culture.

2 A Francophone is one who is proficient in the French language, after years of immersion within the culture and/or practice with the language.


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