

FRANC-PARLER

SIMONE RENAUD DIETIKER



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SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY

FRANC-PARLER

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PREFACE

The writing of a textbook is a demanding task—one worth undertaking only if it will improve significantly upon those already on the market. The challenges are many: how to deal with simplified constructions and limited vocabulary and yet avoid repetition and boredom; whether to use English for clear, concise directions and explanations or to approach directly the target language itself; how to provide a practical vocabulary—parts of the body, the weather, time, clothing—and yet appeal to contemporary student interests (money, love, travel, youth and old age, women's lib); how to present French culture in a manner which is interesting and which offers insights into the behavior of another people; how to give the students flexible, practical “formulas” for expressing themselves, yet not crowd the book (or the mind) with complex, unnecessary, grammar — *l'imparfait du subjonctif*, for example. And finally, but certainly no less important, the writer must confront the problem of conveying the importance of the sound of French, the spoken language, while dealing with the other skills. In *Franc-Parler* all of these problems have been carefully addressed, and the result is what we hope will be a refreshing, practical, well-balanced, and flexible approach to the teaching of French.

I have tried most of the approaches to the teaching of French, from the completely Direct Method (at the Alliance Française in Paris, in classes of foreigners from fifteen or more different countries) to the old-fashioned method of translation (in extension classes for adults and in classes of two to five-year old

children in a Montessori school). Each method has its merits, and each has served me well, although proving to be restrictive when practiced too rigidly. Rest assured, *Franc-Parler* does not offer a new method. Efficiency and practicality—what works best at the moment to help students understand, speak, and write French—were the guiding forces in its preparation. The program has been developed according to three general principles: The belief that the spoken language should be taught first, with a strong emphasis on correct pronunciation; the conviction that French grammar, at times so complex and confusing, is fairly logical and reasonable, and can be simplified, clarified, and made palatable; and the confidence that all this can be attained while making the study of French fun and enjoyable to both teacher and student.

What features of *Franc-Parler* make it distinctive? How does it differ from other beginning French texts? One difference is that *Franc-Parler* has been developed to meet more accurately the frequently diverse needs of both the student and teacher. The textbook itself has been designed to satisfy the needs of the student, and each explanation of grammar is thus followed immediately by exercises which allow the students to proceed through the material at their own pace, and with frequent reinforcement. In addition, the unnatural question-answer-question-answer format and the frequently artificial dialogue formats have been shunned in favor of a more realistic monologue (dialogues in the first two chapters) which serves the student, once out of the classroom, as an authentic model of French in a realistic context. The Instructor's Manual completes the dual function of the program by providing suggestions for introducing the new vocabulary and grammar of each chapter around the theme of the Presentation, and for developing increasingly more meaningful situations which help the student progress systematically from the more mechanistic exercises to the generation of real language.

With this separation of roles in view, I have not hesitated, especially in early chapters, to incorporate English explanations into the textbook. If an explanation can be made in precise, simple French I do so, but at times a clear statement in English will save considerable time and can avoid misleading mimicry. We can differentiate between exposure to the French language, which we all favor, and explaining problems of usage. In any case, it is the teacher who determines the amount of English to be used in the classroom, and that implies not an absolute, but a judicious ban of the student's language.

Similarly, I have included in the review chapters and the tape program translation exercises which emphasize the pitfalls the students will encounter in moving from one language to another. In these translations are emphasized what I call "contrastive translation," a preventive translation. For example, students must be reminded of the difference between "Look at the flower" and "**Regarde la fleur**"; they need to practice the occasions when "to be" is translated by "**avoir**" (**avoir faim** and so forth)—not because translation is good or bad, but because behind every direct perception in a second language lurks a translation, implicit or explicit.

And finally, since I believe that French phonetics should be taught before anything else, *Franc-Parler* contains two brief units of pronunciation preliminary to the succession of body chapters. Each unit should take no more than one or two

class periods, and will pay dividends throughout the rest of the semester in correct spellings, better pronunciation, and a more self-assured student. The Instructor's Manual contains a variety of suggestions for presenting the phonetic material in a stimulating manner.

Franc-Parler itself is a pun; it means to speak French, and to speak frankly. I have spoken frankly about what is good and perhaps not so good about France. And I have tried to teach students to speak a French that is equally forceful and clear, personal yet direct. If this book lives up to its title, the credit must be shared with a number of people. Most of the credit for developing the exercises and more creative games in the workbook goes to Gérard Burger. He is also responsible for the workbook being more than a simple repetition of the material in the text and for integrating the text, workbook and tape. Credit must be shared too with Stanley Galek, Modern Language Editor, for his most reasonable direction in the development of *Franc-Parler*. I am also grateful to Kathy and Nancy, who typed, typed, typed, and to my children, who “liberated” me of household chores while I was at my desk.



Simone Renaud Dietiker was born in the western part of France, near La Rochelle. She was raised in Morocco, where her parents taught until 1946. She studied in Paris and took her degrees at the Sorbonne. These include a License in Classic Languages, a CAPES in Modern Languages, a Diplôme in Teaching French to Foreign Students. She taught successively in French Schools in Paris, in Geneva, Switzerland (Smith College Junior Year Abroad), at the ESPPPF at the Sorbonne, at the Institut de Phonétique, Alliance Française, Cours de Civilisation Française, all in Paris. She came to the US in 1959 and has lived here since. She has taught at the University of Oregon in Eugene and, since 1964, at San José State University. Professor Dietiker is also the author of *En Bonne Forme*, Révision de grammaire française, published by D. C. Heath in 1973.

INTRODUCTION

Franc-Parler is divided into two pronunciation units, twenty body chapters, and a comprehensive section of review exercises (in the Appendix). Each body chapter centers on a subject and a practical vocabulary—weather, family, clothes, among others; later chapters include subjects that are more challenging such as money, travel, and women’s rights. Throughout the book I have tried to give a realistic picture of French culture—what the problems are for the inhabitants as well as what remains attractive to tourists who visit the “city of light.” For instance, as early as Chapter 5 a paragraph on the characteristics of French feast days, saints’ days, and holidays appears. The reading selection in Chapter 8 is a dialogue between a French woman and an American woman—a humorous comparison of shopping practices. Similarly, a later dialogue between two boys—one French, one American—compares habits of dress and ways of spending a Sunday. As soon as the student’s vocabulary and proficiency allow, the cultural matter becomes more challenging. The last chapters consider the state of French medicine and social security; French vacation habits—the August holiday, the flight to the Mediterranean; the division of labor in French society—who gets paid for what; and finally, the social problems that plague the French today—low pay, foreign workers, defense cost, political corruption, pollution of landscape, sea, air, and so

LESSON STRUCTURE

forth. That chapter is appropriately called “Rien ne va!” and grammatically deals with negative forms.

Chansons

Each of the twenty chapters follows a similar format, beginning with a song which is related to the theme of the chapter. These songs are not meant to be treated as grammar exercises, though they have been selected because of their consistency with the contents of each chapter (e.g., “Mon père m’a donné un mari”—la famille; “Alouette je te plumerai”—les parties du corps). I have chosen old French tunes because they are an important part of French culture. Some have real historical interest (Orléans, Beaugency); others convey both historical and emotional interest (“Le roi a fait battre tambour”). Texts for a number of these songs appear in the Appendix, and historical explanations are made available to the instructor in the Instructor’s Manual.

Présentation

The “présentation”—a dialogue or monologue—presents the lexical and grammatical problems of the chapter. The theme of the chapter, appropriate vocabulary and idioms, irregular verbs (if any are treated), and grammar problems are all drawn together in this initial section. I have made these presentations as humorous or entertaining as possible to highlight the problems for students and to make the forms and the problems more memorable.

I have chosen to present this material in the form of a monologue or dialogue for several reasons: 1) a monologue or simple dialogue serves as an authentic model of language; 2) the theme of a monologue lends itself well to the oral presentation of vocabulary and grammar to the class; 3) the monologue or dialogue provides students with an excellent model for speaking or writing about themselves or for communicating to others. Using the theme of each chapter as a point of departure for presenting the grammar and vocabulary, the instructor should “reconstruct” each *Présentation* to adapt it to his or her own situation, and should apply it whenever possible to the personality and situation of the class, or of individual students. This exercise also provides students with a model for altering the *Présentation* to suit individual circumstances for both conversation and composition.

Prononciation

In addition to the two preliminary units, a brief section dealing with specific sounds and pronunciation problems appears in each chapter.

Verbes Irréguliers

Beginning in Chapter 4, and then in numerous chapters throughout, irregular verbs and orthographic changes in verbs are presented. Corresponding exercises are provided for both written and oral development.

Constructions à retenir

Also beginning in Chapter 4 and continuing throughout the text is the presentation of practical idiomatic expressions, together with numerous exercises designed to promote both comprehension and retention.

Structures

The grammar section is central to each chapter. Wherever possible I have unified related grammar points to avoid teaching in bits and pieces. For instance, all the material on adjectives appears in Chapters 2–5. This arises logically from the treatment of gender in Chapter 2. In Chapter 10, the material on direct and indirect objects and pronominal verbs has been brought together. I progress as logically as possible from one problem to another. The use of *avoir positif* (**j'ai une auto**) calls for the negative: **je n'ai pas d'auto, il n'y a pas d'auto**. This in turn suggests the use of **pas de** with other types of verbs: **je ne mange pas d'escargots** and then **beaucoup d'escargots**, since the construction is similar (disappearance of the indefinite or partitive article). I explain the pronominal verbs, “**je me regarde**,” in relation to “**il me regarde**,” the direct object pronoun.

Franç-Parler does not attempt to present all of French grammar at the first-year level. Many books still include the *passé simple*, *passé antérieur*, and *plus-que-parfait du subjonctif* in their last chapters. These tenses are not very useful to a first-year student. Complexities tend to confuse rather than to clarify a problem. Therefore, a number of grammatical points which are premature to the study of French at the first-year level have been eliminated; the students will not find the forms of the tenses mentioned except for the *passé simple* which is presented in the Appendix.

Exercises

Each grammatical point is followed by an exercise so that the students can immediately practice what they have learned. These exercises do not test so much as reinforce. They are meant to involve the student actively in the lesson before moving on to new material.

I have not provided “conversation,” “question-and-answer,” or “creative” exercises in the textbook. Conversation is spontaneous and oral. Such exercises are neither. I cannot imagine students sitting down at home and asking themselves such questions as: “**Que fait ton père?**” “**Mon père est mécanicien.**” “**A quelle heure est-ce que tu te lèves?**” “**Je me lève à 6 h.**” “**Comment vas-tu?**” “**Je vais bien.**” When studying outside the classroom the students are better served by an authentic language model than by questions and answers.

Creative exercises are very important, but they should remain oral. Therefore, I have included them in the Instructor's Manual only, and I suggest that the teacher use the presentation or lecture as a point of departure and that meaningful exercises be developed around these topics. Moreover, I have offered suggestions for personalizing each grammar exercise in order to put the grammar into action. Within a short time, the students should be in control of sufficient vocabulary and grammar patterns to carry on real conversations with a variety of vocabulary and

spontaneity. In addition, the laboratory program also provides for the personal questioning of the student.

Lectures

Following the grammar discussions are “lectures” in the form of cultural readings and poems which relate to the subject of the chapter. These are meant to be read and commented on in class. A wide variety of subjects are included, such as the travel habits and vacation preferences of the French people, the French MLF, and the reluctance of some French women to be liberated.

Most of the poems have not appeared in other textbooks before. “Chant Song” and “Familiale” by Prévert, “Conversation” by Jean Tardieu, and “Si tu t’imagines” by R. Queneau are some of the poems included.

Composition

Each chapter ends with a “composition” which can be done orally in class and then written. At the beginning of the book, such compositions are “*dirigées*” by questions, suggestions, and sentences that are half-finished in order to guide the students and encourage them to make use of the material learned. The instructor should discourage the use of a dictionary, since the book supplies sufficient questions, vocabulary, and syntactical models for a dialogue or short informal essay in French.

It is difficult to provide a book for all academic situations: quarters, trimesters, semesters, three and five-day schedules. Some books with thirty to forty chapters contain enough material for two years. The twenty chapters of *Franc-Parler* provide the right amount of material for a full-year course. The grammar has been streamlined to the needs of the first-year student. The twenty body chapters can be divided into two semesters of ten chapters; three trimesters of seven, seven and six; or four quarters of five. The review material in the Appendix is progressive in nature, which allows the instructor to assign review exercises at any period break, for example, the fifth, seventh, tenth, or fourteenth chapters. The exercises in the review section often combine problems of two or three chapters. Tests covering the appropriate materials are provided in the Instructor’s Manual.

Cahier de travail et de laboratoire

The laboratory manual/workbook is closely integrated with the textbook and the tape program; it has been designed to reinforce the textbook material by providing original and stimulating readings, pronunciation drills, exercises, *dictées*, crossword puzzles, and numerous other activities.

Throughout the textbook are slogans, illustrations, and photos with captions that can be used for comments or conversations. The slogans are explained in the Instructor’s Manual; they are in the form of sayings, mottos, or colloquial sentences that will hopefully give students a feeling for the language and an insight into French culture. “**Métro, Boulot, Dodo,**” “**Faut l’faire**” are part of French life and culture, as much as Versailles and the RER; these, I believe, will enable the students to learn not only French, but more about France.

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