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## Chapter 8

# Cultural Immersion in France

Nancy Sloan Goldberg

Note: Section II includes Chapters 4-14. These chapters use a standardized template to discuss the details of their respective study abroad programs and reference Deardorff's (2012) framework for intercultural competencies. The use of this template and the intercultural competencies framework are described in the Section II introduction. All courses in this section (except for Chapter 6) were taught through Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU), a mid-sized state school located in Murfreesboro, Tennessee (USA).

The *MTSU Summer Normandy*, a French immersion program (2005-2019), changed names and sites three times during its fourteen-year tenure: MTSU-Cherbourg IUT Summer Program (2005-2009), MTSU-IUT Cherbourg-Manche (2010-2015) and MTSU Summer in Normandy Program (2016-2019). The Institut Universitaire de Technologie (IUT) is the community college system in France. The four-week (later three-week) program was housed in university buildings in the small cities of Cherbourg-Octeville, Saint-Lô, and Caen, all in Normandy, France. The uniqueness of this program is its dual focus on expanding students' linguistic and cultural competencies in the backdrop of French historical events. Students created deeper connections with the people as well as the history of France through various immersion activities. The program takes place during the month of June and included 9-19 students each summer with an average of 12 students. The program has run 14 times since its inauguration in 2005.

## THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Foundational elements to the course include experiential learning, a functional/notional syllabus, and standards-based oral proficiencies. Both the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) focus on the fundamental values of culture, communication, and comparison to develop transparent and comprehensive syllabi. This focus is needed to design integrated teaching and learning materials and create assessments that help students progress independently. These standard theories draw many of their current values from previous research. Kolb's (1984) cycle of experiential learning remains an invaluable source on the principles of the integration of knowledge, activity, and reflection. The Boston Center for Teaching and Learning highlights four broad categories of student engagement that are mutually dependent: active experimentation, during which learners test new ideas and enhance their skills in a new experience; concrete experience, where learners engage in an authentic situation; reflective observation, which provides space for the learner to discern new events and relate it to past experiences; and abstract conceptualization, in which the learner separates the concrete experiences into new, abstract concepts (Boston University, n.d.). Moore (2010) focuses on practical examples of experiential learning outside the classroom, including study abroad, service learning, and student teaching.

According to the Experiential Learning guide published by Boston University, during the experiential learning process, "the learner is actively engaged in posing questions, investigating, experimenting, being curious, solving problems, assuming responsibility, being creative, and constructing meaning." Further, the faculty leader's roles include selecting suitable experiences,

posing problems, setting boundaries, supporting learners, ensuring physical and emotional safety, and facilitating the learning process (Boston University, n.d.). For an extensive inventory of best practices for successful experiential education, with emphasis on the relationships between the learner and the educator, risk taking, and the possibility to learn from successes to misunderstandings, refer to Gass et al. (2012).

In keeping with these standards of best practices, I filled the roles of both program director and teacher, conducted all classes and evaluations, and was with the students for the entire nine hours each day. All activities, homework, and group projects were conducted in French. Regardless of venue, attendance was required for all events, both in and outside the classroom. In order to accommodate different student learning preferences, I categorized all activities according to the VARK modalities. Fleming and Mills (1992) used the acronym VARK to define learners' preferences as Visual, Aural/Auditory, Read/wRite, Kinesthetic/Hands-on, and Multimodality.

Another pillar of the course was the individual homestay. This important aspect enhanced the immersion experience and emphasized the everyday cultural aspects of living in France. Moreover, in keeping with the CEFR/ACTFL goals as stated above, the students engaged in reflection on cultural differences and were encouraged to analyze and compare the worldview of the host family with their own. There were ample opportunities for this type of individual connection. Each student lived with a different host family and shared all meals (except for midweek lunch), evenings, and weekends as part of the homestay experience. The homestay provided an informal, family-oriented, and non-judgmental space to speak French and experience what normal life was like in a French home. Both the classroom space and the family

space were areas that were familiar to students, affording them a comfortable atmosphere in which to acquire new vocabulary, discover new applications, and combine these elements to successfully develop new language competencies.

In all these activities, students produced language comprehensible to their peers but also to native speakers not accustomed to speaking with foreign students. The students applied new language elements with new-found poise to engage with native speakers of all ages. Activities enabled the students to communicate confidently at every level of formality, such as with local officials or a Holocaust survivor, to less formal situations, such as Sunday dinners, and tasks outside the classroom. MTSU students also organized and created Service-Learning Projects to provide local French elementary school teachers with American cultural detail to enhance their English classes. These days were spent with the French children, many of whom were from our homestay families.

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The course enabled second- and third-year French language students at MTSU to spend four (later three) weeks in an immersive study in France. From 2005 to 2015, the course also included a six-day stay in Paris. The program featured nine or more instructional hours per weekday organized and taught by me and evenings and weekends with French host families. The language requirement for this program included two semesters of college-level French with a grade of C or better.

The course's theme was the culture and people of Normandy. The main course objective was to build confidence in each student's oral and aural skills while engaging directly with the

people and culture of Normandy in the French language. Further objectives included replacing cultural preconceptions with lived experiences and learning to use the French language with different audiences in varied settings. Rather than use a traditional text, students explored realia obtained on-site and interviewed and conversed with native speakers. The students also had access to online resources unique to Normandy. I supplied materials, new vocabulary, and the necessary historical background.

## Course Learning Outcomes

At the end of the course, students will:

- a. Participate in learning practices that are 90% experiential and 10% academic.
- b. Demonstrate effective skills in communication in French, engagement with French culture, the community in Normandy, and the comparison of French and American cultures.
- c. Understand the causal relationship that connects and determines cultural artifacts with language use and will examine and appraise similarities and differences with their own culture.
- d. Convey these new interpretations and other recent perceptions in narratives they construct, using different time registers (past, present, future).
- e. Engage in everyday communicative functions in French, such as using public transportation to go from the homestay site to the classroom and return home and purchasing food in the university cafeteria.

- f. Indicate knowledge of the province of Normandy, especially its economy and agriculture, and will analyze the important role that the towns of Cherbourg, Saint-Lô, and Caen had in French history, especially during World War II and the medieval period.
- g. Apply current and long-standing language structures independently in public settings outside the classroom, such as the train station, shops, and with homestay families.
- h. Work collaboratively to successfully communicate in more complicated public settings, especially in the museum portion of the program in Paris.
- i. Engage in tasks designed to develop soft skills, such as problem-solving, diplomacy, planning, organizing, and expressing emotions.
- j. Demonstrate their comprehension of the knowledge acquired during the program in a culminating activity with the homestay families. Students will write, compose, or otherwise construct an original skit, piece of music, poem, artwork, or other creative product and will present their projects to all the extended homestay families.

## **COURSE HISTORY**

The course was a reformulation of the summer program operated by MTSU and the Université de Picardie Jules Verne, which I directed in 2004. This program included about 100 French language American students from MTSU and other universities outside Tennessee. All students lived together in an unsupervised residence hall, and the faculty shared an apartment about five miles away. In the 2004 program model, local French high school teachers were recruited to teach and evaluate the American students. There was no input invited from the American faculty whose role was minimized to being mere chaperones. This model was problematic and

none of my American colleagues at that time agreed to continue without substantial changes. These circumstances led me to make major alterations to the program structure and execution that was maintained in the future iterations of the program from 2005 until 2019.

## **COURSE LOGISTICS**

The reformulated course carried six credit hours at Middle Tennessee State University. Students had required course responsibilities seven days a week, including class activities from 9 am to 5 pm Monday through Friday and during the evening hours and weekends with their host families. Students were either in class with me or were with members of their French family, and thus were able to obtain a high level of immersion.

The large number of contact hours (120+) justified six hours of credit and allowed the students to qualify for financial aid. Staying with host families and eating lunch in the university dining hall made the program extremely cost-effective, an important incentive for MTSU students. This was also cost-effective for the university, as minimal financial support was needed since the students paid their own expenses. Students were recruited from our own MTSU classes, and many friends signed up together. MTSU students were eligible to participate, regardless of major or minor, if they had studied French for at least two years at the college level.

## **PRE-PROGRAM ACTIVITIES**

Most students who participated in the program represented various skills in French and had almost no experience going abroad. Through interactions with the students, I realized they not only see me as their teacher, but also as a role model while abroad. This aspect as well as the

physical security and emotional health of our students informed the organizational structure of the program, as students were unaccustomed to navigating a foreign culture. The students understood the priorities: first, safety, and second, speaking French while having fun. The course organization was built on the prior relationship between the students and me, as I had taught many of them before the summer, recruited them from my classes, and conducted pre-departure orientations and placement tests. This established relationship created a level of trust and comfort between the students and me in the new setting and served to reduce the anxiety and negative affect inherent with native speaker faculty.

Pre-program activities had two major components: a language proficiency assessment and four hours of group orientation with additional individual sessions. The skills measurement was important in the placement of students with their host families, some of whom spoke no English and would not be able to secure the student's safety in an emergency. I conducted the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) with each student both before leaving for France and at the end of the program. This exit interview included additional questions designed to evaluate the summer program as a whole and was one of the tools used for the final assessment and grading.

The four hours of group orientation were lively sessions on the MTSU campus with both serious and lighthearted moments that grounded the group and helped them bond in a shared experience. We discussed minute details of the program, including buying air tickets, navigating the airport to find the group meeting place, and the types of clothes needed for Normandy. The clothing issue was important because American students dress more informally than French students their age, and our students needed to know that short shorts and plunging necklines

were considered proper only for the beach. We analyzed cultural differences between French and American families to help students understand what to expect in their respective homes. Water and power conservation remain central concerns for French families, and our students understood the use of minute timers, short showers, less food waste, and spending quality time interacting personally with their French parents. The safety of the students was paramount, and we discussed ways to minimize unwanted encounters. This included an interactive workshop on personal safety conducted by a certified RAD (Rape Aggression Defense) system instructor.

## **CLASS ACTIVITIES & INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCIES**

Program activities encompassed a conscious design of experiences in French where cognitive strategies increased critical speaking and listening skills, provided opportunities for reflection, and served to create community among the students (ACTFL, n.d.; Boston University, n.d.; Council of Europe, n.d.; Gass et al., 2012; Fleming & Mills, 1992; Kolb, 1984). Accordingly, both class activities and outside modules led learners to acquire cultural knowledge as well as increase communicative proficiency. These integrated cultural subjects combine aspects of French culture with speaking and listening, all within the format of VARK (Visual, Aural/Auditory, Read/wRite, Kinesthetic) learning preferences. These principles applied to all activities whether they took place inside or outside the classroom, and during field trips or workshops. For example, in blending a cultural artifact (e.g., buying fruit at an open market), learners can observe the importance of the weekly market in France (VRK), learn how to make a purchase (AK), and handle money (VK). As the students advanced in their confidence and knowledge, so did the complexity of the activities. For example, during the morning warm-up, each student narrated a summary of the entire previous evening in the past tense with emphasis on the

family's conversation with the learner and others (VAK). This content was recycled and extended through role plays and imagined conversations in the future or conditional tenses (AR) and also by reflecting on each person's or family member's possible thoughts and concerns (VARK). Individually or in teams, students then competed with others in the class to match up the statements with the correct person (VARK).

These same theoretical guidelines informed the selection of the field trips according to their cultural and historical content, their opportunities for interactive communication, and the ability to provide prospects for comprehensive, holistic activities. Assignments incorporated a cohesive and layered approach to integrating all four language skills with cultural content, such as daily life and local history. Students used French exclusively to engage in preparatory activities and assignments before each day trip, to share what they had learned, and finally to observe, record, and evaluate their impressions. For a tabulated program itinerary and list of course activities, see Appendix 8.1. Some representative activities included in the list are classroom cheese tasting, an art museum visit, and an outdoor market activity. Refer to Appendix 8.2 for guidelines and prompts on these activities.

Following the theoretical guidelines used in the design of the course as stated earlier, every activity, task, and assignment integrated proficiencies in language and culture. Many of these undertakings also featured the development of the skills, knowledge, and attitudes inherent in intercultural competencies. Learners gained culture-specific knowledge and self-awareness, honed their communication skills with native French speakers of all ages, and learned to adapt to new and even uncomfortable situations while remaining polite and respectful. In each of these activities, the students designed their own interactions, articulating their observations and

interpretations in a journal that they later used as a springboard for peer discussion and further analysis (see Appendix 8.3 for guidelines given to the students specifically about intercultural competency).

## Homestay Program

The individual homestay provided consistent and sustained immersion in the French language and everyday cultural aspects of family life in France. Learners developed intercultural competencies through adaptation to a totally unknown situation, and, consequently, they understood the need for flexibility and a tolerant attitude. Everyday situations, such as using the family washing machine, required tact, thoughtful consideration of the price of water and electricity in France, and withholding judgment concerning the condition of the appliance. Having meals with the family provided the opportunity for sharing ideas and opinions on important issues like education and immigration but also less serious subjects like the famous Eurovision Song Contest. The host families and students developed a deep emotional bond, and most kept in touch with each other for years after. One family even came to Tennessee the next year for the wedding of their American student. This activity reinforced the intercultural competencies listed in Table 8.1.

**Table 8.1: Intercultural Competencies in Homestay Program Activity**

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding others' worldviews</li> <li>• Culture-specific knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observe</li> <li>• Listen</li> <li>• Problem-solving</li> <li>• Interpret and analyze</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexibility</li> <li>• Withholding judgment</li> <li>• Respect</li> <li>• Stepping outside the comfort zone</li> </ul>

## Formal French Meal

A local restaurant owner and chef conducted an all-day interactive workshop on all aspects of a traditional French meal. Students learned how to arrange flowers, set a table, and plan, prepare, and present a four-course meal. More importantly, their collaboration with the chef, who was not accustomed to foreign students, brought an appreciation of the significance of food and food preparation in French culture and the reverence French people have for their cuisine. In a restaurant style fashion, the students were organized into groups and received orders from the chef. Students solved these tasks with teamwork and observation of the chef himself, and the results earned praise from him. Through this activity, the students gained invaluable intercultural competencies as listed in Table 8.2.

**Table 8.2: Intercultural Competencies in Formal French Meal Activity**

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Culture-specific knowledge</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Teamwork</li><li>• Communication skills; listen and observe</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Curiosity, discovery</li><li>• Adaptability</li><li>• Stepping outside the comfort zone</li></ul>

## Culminating Activity

Student achievement and success were showcased in a culminating activity described earlier, during which the students wrote an original skit, performed a poem or a piece of music, or displayed imaginative artwork. Prepared for a talent show, many students had musical instruments with them, and they researched and patiently learned by heart a piece by a French composer. Those with musical talents sang or performed newly acquired French folk songs, and

the actors found and interpreted well-known poems. These were performed in front an audience of host families, their children, and friends. The audience welcomed this display of hard work and creativity which they understood to be an expression of affection for them and their culture. The potluck meal was an opportunity for French families to discover a bit of American culture, as this type of communal meal is uncommon in France. Parents often commented that their judgment of American society had changed through participating in this event and through interactions with the students in general. Intercultural competencies emphasized in the culminating activity are listed in Table 8.3.

**Table 8.3: Intercultural Competencies in Culminating Activity**

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural self-awareness</li> <li>• Culture-specific knowledge</li> <li>• Academic content knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creative thinking</li> <li>• Teamwork</li> <li>• Articulation</li> <li>• Technology skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stepping outside the comfort zone</li> <li>• Risk-taking</li> <li>• Patience</li> <li>• Respect</li> </ul>

## Sunday Dinner

Most French families live in proximity to each other, and it is common to find three and four generations living within short driving distances. Eating Sunday dinner at the home of the eldest grandparent or even great-grandparent is a long-standing French tradition. Guests from outside the family do not generally attend, so it was a special honor for our students to be invited to participate each week. This formal meal usually lasts from 3-4 hours, with many courses, including pauses for stories and songs. The students welcomed the opportunity to communicate

with members of the extended French family and to hear diverse views from cousins, aunts, and uncles on everyday matters. However, the length of time at the table, the new and unusual foods, and being the focus of the family’s attention as a special guest, seemed all very challenging to the American students. Students worked together to identify skills (such as active listening, observing, and relating) that would allow them to adapt to this novel cultural experience while remaining open-minded and respectful. The intercultural competencies integrated into this activity are highlighted in Table 8.4.

**Table 8.4: Intercultural Competencies in Sunday Dinner Activity**

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding others’ worldviews</li> <li>• Culture-specific knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication skills; listen; observe; relate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empathy</li> <li>• Open-mindedness</li> <li>• Adaptability</li> <li>• Stepping outside the comfort zone</li> </ul>

## Holocaust Survivor

In preparation for the visit to the D-Day (the day when the Allied forces launched an invasion on Nazi-occupied France during WWII) Beaches in the area, a historian and/or a local researcher gave lectures to the students on the events leading up to and including all aspects of World War II. After these traditional classroom presentations a Holocaust survivor spoke to the students about his experiences from the age of 14 to 18, when he was liberated from the Dachau concentration camp. Despite his advanced age (he passed away in 2015), he stood for nearly two hours and recounted the cruelty, barbarity, and violence of what he had endured. The students

were at first shocked and uncomfortable, and many realized that they had little knowledge of any part of the war, and thus voiced feelings of guilt. Students responded to the survivor with many tears, but also empathy and warmth, and they welcomed the appeal for tolerance and peace that ended his presentation. The students formulated questions for him about his life after the war and wondered if they would have had the same strength and courage as he showed. See Appendix 8.2 for sample prompts for this activity. Intercultural competencies targeted in this activity are listed in Table 8.5.

**Table 8.5: Intercultural Competencies in Holocaust Survivor Activity**

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culture-specific knowledge</li> <li>• Academic content knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen; observe; evaluate; interpret</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empathy</li> <li>• Discovery</li> <li>• Respect</li> <li>• Stepping outside the comfort zone</li> </ul>

## Service Learning in French Schools

Since many of the homestay parents had children in the local public schools, it was natural that the American students be invited to visit the classrooms. The local teachers formalized these visits into a mini-course on American culture, where the MTSU students taught games and songs and tutored the students in the English classes. The American students adapted well to the impromptu nature of many of the sessions, improvising contests, demonstrating baseball, and reading stories to the French children. The MTSU students were also asked to observe and evaluate the English classes themselves, and they solved this potentially awkward situation by withholding an outright verbal judgment and instead emphasizing the enthusiasm of the teacher and students. This activity allowed the students to develop the intercultural competencies listed in Table 8.6.

**Table 8.6: Intercultural Competencies in Service Learning in French Schools Activity**

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cultural self-awareness</li><li>• Understanding others' cultural attitudes</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Creative thinking</li><li>• Problem-solving</li><li>• Leadership</li><li>• Teamwork</li><li>• Communication skills</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Risk-taking</li><li>• Resilience</li><li>• Patience</li><li>• Adaptability</li><li>• Open-minded</li><li>• Respect</li></ul>

## Six Days in Paris

Students visited museums and other cultural and historical sites, navigated the city on public transportation, and ate in restaurants in groups or on their own. Learners observed and analyzed famous examples of French art and culture. They became adept at interpreting the highly automated systems, asking for directions, and making small talk with French people. They expressed pride in their progress in French. In this activity, the students gained the intercultural competencies listed in Table 8.7.

**Table 8.7: Intercultural Competencies in Six Days in Paris Activity**

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Culture-specific knowledge</li><li>• Academic content knowledge</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Problem-solving</li><li>• Articulation</li><li>• Teamwork</li><li>• Communication skills</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Curiosity</li><li>• Discovery</li><li>• Open-minded</li><li>• Adaptability</li></ul>

## POST-PROGRAM AND FUTURE CLASS ACTIVITIES

Students typically had many commitments to meet after returning to the United States, especially summer jobs and additional summer courses. After devoting every minute to the

summer program for four weeks, they needed to resume other activities and family obligations. However, students enrolled in the Honors College later offered presentations to the Honors faculty and students.

The summer program ended in 2020 because of COVID-19 and has not restarted. The partner school has also eliminated its summer program. In 2018, I tentatively planned to expand our MTSU students' interaction with IUT students. Casual meetups were not practical because the French students did not have adequate experience with non-native French learners. I thought it might work better to match up student learners of English with ours. Sadly, we did not get a chance to implement this new feature because of COVID-19.

## **EVALUATION AND ASSIGNMENTS**

The formative evaluation was based solely on my assessment of each student's effort, participation, and cooperation. The grading system for the course was pass/fail with an 80% positive achievement rate on all activities, tasks, and assignments, including intercultural competencies, required for a grade of P, with 100% attendance. The evaluation was recorded every day and communicated to each student at the end of the week. The summary evaluation was based on grades from the culminating activity and the individual post-test. Since the culminating activity was a group effort, with ample class time to prepare, the grades generally reflected the fun atmosphere at the end of the course. See Appendix 8.4 for the grading scale used for this course.

## STUDENT FEEDBACK

Formal evaluations were rare in the early years of this program. Later, when the MTSU summer programs were institutionalized, the Office of Education Abroad conducted student evaluations after the students returned to campus. Since none of the results were shared with me, I relied on the comments made to me by individual students. Students had grown close to their host families and appreciated the intercultural experiences that caused them to reflect on shared commonalities with French people, as well as new and even surprising ways of doing things. They expressed a new awareness of seeing the world as French people envisioned it. They were also proud of the advances they made in their mastery of the French language and proudly used the informal vocabulary taught to them by the teenage members of the family. Several of the students wrote notes to me, some even in French, and shared below. Following each quote, the program year and the intercultural competencies gained by the students are listed.

“There are not enough words in the dictionary to express the life changing experience that was our trip to France. My appreciation for the world, as well as my country now embody complete meaning.” (*Student 1, 2006, understanding others’ world views, cultural self-awareness, respect*)

“I’ve learned so much, both technically and culturally. I learned a lot of French, the grammar and the culture! It was an unbelievable experience!” (*Student 2, 2015, stepping outside of comfort zones, communication, and technology skills*)

“I have had the most life changing experience. Aside from improving my French speaking and listening abilities, I feel more confident about my beliefs and also I feel

more sure of what I want in life. I have gained new insight of the person I am and the person I want to grow to be.” (*Student 3, 2018, risk-taking, adaptability, open-mindedness*)

## Students Survey Pre/Post Data

I administered the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) to each student as a pretest before leaving for France to gain an understanding of their language level. The OPI consists of Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced, with most of the program learners testing at the Intermediate-Low level, which meant that they could speak on simple topics in two to three sentences. A few students were at the Novice level, meaning that their speech was limited to rote phrases and lists. The Summary OPI administered at the end of the program showed a marked increase in French proficiency, with most students achieving the Intermediate-High level, a leap of two levels. Even those students at the Novice Level improved by two steps and could speak for longer periods on topics they had experienced. All students successfully used the past tense, and some chose to use the future and the subjunctive in their answers. Most importantly, the students responded in a self-assured and confident manner, with few hesitations and less searching for their words. Students were eager to give their opinions in French, and most seemed to forget they were in a (somewhat) formal test situation.

## CAVEATS AND REFLECTIONS

The motivation of the students to experience French culture directly through language was the strength of the program. Their dedication to this goal, their open-mindedness, and their flexibility were important keys to their success. The warm support of their host families nurtured student growth on the weekends, making the homestay an irreplaceable foundation of the

program. Further, the very full daily schedule and assignments during the week left little time for questionable or risky behavior. It was important that the 10-12 students and I both knew each other to some degree before the trip. The course was one of the first of its kind at MTSU and served as a model for other summer programs that sought to internationalize the curriculum.

The following practical suggestions are for faculty leaders and program coordinators:

1. One director/teacher in charge of all aspects of the program, including curriculum design, teaching, implementation of activities, and program budget (the program was self-funded from student fees);
2. Keep the number of students small, no more than 14;
3. Get to know the students well before leaving campus;
4. Create activities that meet program goals and are enjoyable and unique to the program;
5. Use local events and sites as learning spaces, such as municipal locations that are free;
6. Require homestay with one student per family including weekends;
7. An on-site program partner is needed to recruit families well in advance. There should be a contract so the hosts know what is expected in terms of meals provided, curfew times, etc.;
8. Create a full seven-day-per-week program with no opportunity for questionable behavior;

9. Include a culminating activity that doubles as a farewell party; encourage student creativity.

The *Summer in Normandy* program was successfully conducted for 15 years due to its dual pedagogical focus on developing students' French language proficiency as well as their intercultural competencies. The organizational pillars of the course were the classroom and the homestay families, and the discussions, activities, and assignments situated within the two overlapping spheres. The curriculum sought to engage the imagination of the students to make deeper connections with the French people, their history, and their modern everyday culture. The ideas and tips presented in this chapter can be replicated in other faculty-led programs that aim to focus on increasing foreign language proficiency in tandem with growing cultural competency.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 8.1: Program Itinerary and Course Activities

#### *Itinerary*

Note: This itinerary was used in Caen (2016) where all activities were in the target language.

Day	Morning	Afternoon
1	Arrival in Paris; meet students and accompany them to program site.	Host families and French liaison meet us at program site.
2	Students remain with hosts all day to get to know them and recover from jet lag	
3	In-class topic: ACTFL oral interview (pretest) Getting around, asking directions, politeness; describing oneself Research and read about the life of Guillaume le Conquérant in Caen and Falaise	Walk together to the pedestrian shopping street; exchange money if needed. Students buy bus passes in TL Follow the “Trail of Guillaume” in the city center, including the cathedral and the two Abbeys. Homework for tomorrow: 10 observations of the day
4	In-class topics: various activities on house, garden, 10 observations	Prepare for trip and activity at Mont-Saint-Michel
5	Travel by bus to and spend day at Mont-Saint-Michel	Visit to the manuscript museum in Avranches Homework for tomorrow: 10 observations of the day
6	In-class topics: various activities on health, pharmacy, hair stylist  Prepare art museum activity	Art museum activity Homework for tomorrow: 10 observations of the day
7-8	Weekend with host family	
9	In-class topic: prepare for service learning	Service learning in French schools

Day	Morning	Afternoon
10	In-class topic: discuss service-learning experience Prepare visit to the Bayeux Tapestry Museum including history, impact of Guillaume's victory	Documentary film on local farmer Free time
11	Travel by train to Bayeux; visit the Museum of the Tapestry and the Cathedral	Visit to the Museum Baron Gérard Homework for tomorrow: 10 observations of the day
12	In-class topics: trades and professions; weather, the dairy industry	Visit to the Museum of Normandy (19 <sup>th</sup> century social history) Homework for tomorrow: 10 observations of the day
13	Travel by bus to Livarot (cheese factory) and the automaton museum at Falaise	Visit to the interactive Chateau at Falaise, the birthplace of Guillaume
14-15	Weekend with host family	
16	In class topics: cuisine, table arts, food and restaurants Documentary French film on WWII (part one); prepare questions for afternoon speaker	Guest speaker: events leading up to WWII in France and in Germany; Holocaust Survivor: life in the concentration camps and post-war difficulties in France
17	In-class topics: clothing, humor Open grammar topic (practice and discussion) Documentary French film on WWII (part two)	Visit to the Mémorial, WWII museum Homework for tomorrow: 10 observations of the day
18	In-class topics: D-Day and the Battle of Normandy Begin preparation for culminating project	Prepare site visits for tomorrow

Day	Morning	Afternoon
19	Travel by bus to sites important for the D-Day landings: the Airborne Museum, the German battery at Azeville, Pointe du Hoc, Utah Beach and Omaha Beach	Visit to the extensive orientation center at the American Cemetery at Omaha Beach Guided visit of the cemetery with participation in the ceremonial lowering of the American flag before closing Homework for tomorrow: 10 observations of the day
20	In- class: ACTFL oral interview (posttest) Finish culminating project	Finish culminating project 7PM: presentation of culminating project to host parents and friends Pot-luck supper
21	Weekend with host family	Official end of the summer program
22	Departure for airport for US	
23-28	Some years: travel by train to Paris	Spend 6 days in Paris visiting sites and museums. Students write observations and discuss them each morning at breakfast

### *Class Activities, Tasks, Assignments*

The activities, tasks, and assignments summarized below merge communicative and intercultural themes according to the theoretical framework. Learners fulfilled the assignments orally, through in-class writing assignments, or in personal journals. It is important to note that there are many connections among the competencies sought, and the activities are easily adaptable to changing situations and new opportunities. The activities took place both inside and outside the classroom, thus creating a learning space without walls. The tasks and assignments listed below often rotated from year to year. Students performed the following:

1. Narrated the previous evening's events, answering questions from their peers and hypothesizing about the future.
2. Recycled previous learning by responding to situation cards ("Explain to the waiter in an expensive restaurant in Paris that you forgot your wallet") both individually and with partners.
3. Studied visual images of homes, related new vocabulary to the images, and described each room in the host family's home.
4. Reviewed vocabulary needed for map reading, applied the words by drawing a map with a partner, then blindfolded learners followed their partner's directions; followed by a walk to the city center to apply orientation and map terms.
5. Created a story based on freely chosen images, narrated it to the class verbally or through actions, class recycled content with questions or hypotheses.
6. Daily assessment and discussion of sentiments and emotions.
7. Reviewed physical and emotional descriptors, then described themselves and compared those portrayals with their host family and American family.
8. Reviewed vocabulary of professions in France, applied new words in a Password style game.
9. Presentation of local cheeses and cheesemaking, with formal tasting protocol and analysis.
10. Food preparation and meals with host family; topics of conversation among family members and with the student; the family's evening activities.
11. Comparison of French family's daily life with student's life in the US.

12. Organization of French homes and disposition of furniture and bathroom fixtures, comparison with American toilets and showers.
13. Ways French and Americans express emotion.
14. Analysis of the dairy industry as a vital part of the economy in Normandy.
15. Individually or in teams, viewed visual images and heard interviews introducing the concepts, vocabulary, and historical context of the site visit for that afternoon, e.g. horse breeding facility, cheese factory, and museums. Learners kept journals and/or lists of their observations and impressions which were presented to the class the next day.
16. Walk to *Musée du Bocage Normand*, a regional agricultural museum highlighting the history, ethnography, economy, and agriculture of Normandy; learners investigated farm animal culture of Normandy, local crop raising practices in the cultivation of linen and other fibers for cloth; hands-on interaction with 19th-century farm equipment, clothing and other everyday artifacts from a typical rural Norman farm (observations/impressions).
17. Guided visit to the *Musée de la Glacerie*, history of the glass and mirror factory that produced the mirrors for Versailles and fueled the local Norman economy for decades; the evolution of roofing in the area; clothing of 19th-century residents, especially handmade lace headdresses and typical trousseau items (observations/impressions).
18. Guided visit to *Musée des beaux-arts*, learners viewed and analyzed the works of artists they had prepared during the morning session and presented their appraisals to the class; students asked questions.

19. Scrutinized the long history and construction of Mont Saint-Michel through visual images and film; students then visited the site, including the basilica and the village (observations/impressions).
20. Visit to the *Mémorial Museum* on the battle of Normandy and war in the 20th century; students researched and learned about World War II through film and the presentations of guest speakers, including a Holocaust survivor; students furthered their knowledge by engaging in free-style questioning and interviewing; learners applied this new information to the visit to the museum (observations/impressions).
21. Visit to a medieval Scriptorium; students engaged in an interactive and hands-on history of vellum, papyrus, and ink; reflected on the process of manuscript writing and illumination in the Middle Ages, applied new understanding in their close observation of a collection of medieval manuscripts (observations/impressions).
22. Visit to a working cider production facility, where students learned the history, procedures, and cider making's central importance to regional life, customs, and importance to the local economy (observations/impressions).
23. Participated in an all-day hands-on workshop on the formal traditional French table, including flower arrangements, table settings, preparation, and presentation of local cuisine (meal included).
24. Participated in a chocolate sculpting workshop, learned the importance of gastronomy and cuisine competitions in French culture and the history of chocolate and techniques of chocolate sculpting (tasting included).

25. Visited the memorial to Major James Howie and understood the importance of the US 29th Division in the Battle of Normandy during WWII (observations/impressions).
26. Visited the regional historical archives, viewed ancient maps, manuscripts, genealogy scrolls, and other rare documents (observations/impressions).
27. Visited *La Cité de la Mer*; a research center and aquarium; students learned how nuclear energy works in France through an examination of a retired atomic submarine (observations/impressions).
28. Participated in a workshop on making traditional Norman bobbin lace and executed simple designs using bobbins, pins, and threads of this time-honored regional craft.
29. Participated in a workshop taught by a regional Folklore group; learners performed traditional Norman folk dances and tried out 19<sup>th</sup>-century instruments.
30. Attended sessions at a local circus school; students learned and performed partner acrobatics, juggling, tumbling, and rope tricks.
31. Went individually to a traditional local outdoor market, bought items for lunch, recorded the prices, and presented the results to the class before eating together.
32. Played a hidden objects game in the shopping area of Cherbourg; learners read signs, asked local residents for directions, and bought small items to arrive at the next clue.
33. Bought a one-week ticket to ride the subway in Paris; students learned to overcome adverse conditions, such as noise and impatient commuters.

34. Navigated the complex Paris Museum map and ticket structure and were able to use the voucher to its maximum advantage.
35. Engaged directly in authentic listening situations with adult native speakers.
36. Visited and read interactive panels at sites important to the D-Day Landings, especially the American Beaches and the American Cemetery; they applied what they had previously learned about World War II, they reflected on the events of June 6, 1944, and imagined themselves in that situation and shared their emotions; they collected sand and participated in the lowering of the American flag at the cemetery at Omaha Beach (observations/impressions).
37. Visited Giverny, the home and gardens of Claude Monet; learners explored the gardens and related real-life nature to the paintings of Monet.
38. Visited an interactive museum to view the Bayeux Tapestry; learners analyzed its construction, the meaning of the panels, and its symbols; they understood the tapestry's more than 1000-year-old history and the efforts necessary to protect this priceless work of art; students also visited the Musée Baron Gérard, an art and history museum with collections of paintings and ceramics from antiquity to the present.
39. Visited the city and harbor of Saint-Malo; students explored the walled ramparts and understood the importance of the location of the port to merchants, pirates, and explorers, such as Jacques Cartier, who set sail for Canada from Saint-Malo in 1534.

## Appendix 8.2: Sample Prompts

### *Classroom Cheese Tasting*

In class before the activity, students learn the importance of cheese to French culture, how it is manufactured, the kinds of milk used to make the 349 types of cheese, and the cheese specific to each region, including Normandy. Students sample at least five kinds of cheese, according to traditional French protocol, and discuss and rate each cheese using as many new words as possible. Students write a summary report of their tastes and opinions.

### *Art Museum Visit*

In class before the visit, students research the museum's collection, choose one artist each, and learn about the life, works, and styles of that artist. The student prepares a list of general questions to answer through research. At the museum, each student locates the work and presents it to the class; other students ask questions based on their own research.

### *Outdoor Market Activity*

In class before the activity, students acquire a vocabulary of French food and products likely to be at the market; students make a list of what they intend to buy; and roleplay merchant and buyer with student-generated questions in French. At the market, students write down the prices and names of what they bought; the class meets up, and each student describes what they bought, how many, and the price before eating.

### *Presentation and Conversation with a Holocaust Survivor*

Before the session, students spend considerable time at a local World War II Museum, learning about the war, the D-Day invasion, and the Holocaust. Students prepare a list of possible

questions for the speaker. At the session, they listen to the speaker, take notes, and ask him questions. The students also participate in a discussion about the post-war period and the possibilities for world peace. Students write in their journals about this experience, recording what impressed and/or shocked them.

## Appendix 8.3: Intercultural Competency General

### Guidelines

These guidelines are given to the students pre-departure.

1. Remember you are in a foreign country and people will see you as representatives of the United States. You are not invisible.
2. Treat your homestay families like your grandparents, not your parents.
3. Staring at strangers is not considered rude in France; neither is getting too close to people in crowds.
4. French people do not normally smile at everyone the way Americans do, so don't assume they are angry.
5. When speaking, think about what you want to say first and express yourself simply. Your level in French is not the same as it is in English; don't worry about accuracy.

## Appendix 8.4: Grading Scale

The grading system for the course was pass/fail, and in order to pass, learners needed to achieve an average of 80% on all activities, tasks, and assignments, including intercultural competencies. Perfect attendance was required. Student progress was measured using an assessment scale of 0 to 4 informed by guidelines from the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), where 0=0; 1=25%; 2=50%; 3=75% and 4=100%. These daily grades alerted the students to any problems, and regular conferences enabled students to make adjustments to any aspect of their participation. Achievement was high and enthusiastic, even though everyone knew that no one had ever failed the course.