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MASTERING FRENCH

E. NEATHER

EDITORIAL CONSULTANT
BETTY PARR

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SERIES EDITOR'S PREFACE

The first language books in the Master Series, which are intended primarily for adult beginners without a teacher, should fill a notable gap in an otherwise well cultivated field. The publishers make no promises of instant mastery, and recognise that no one slim volume can contain more than the basic essentials of any living language. It is believed, however, that these initial books provide a carefully planned introduction to the language and a secure foundation for further study, for which it is hoped that the Master Series will ultimately give additional help.

Existing publications seem either to concentrate on teaching 'how to survive' or else to adopt a mainly academic approach. In these new books, the publishers aim to assist not only those studying a language for practical – generally touristic or commercial – purposes, but also those wishing to acquire a more formal knowledge of the grammar and structures of the language, with the intention of extending their skills of reading and writing by subsequent study. The dual aims of these books are made clear from the start, so that students may determine their own learning procedures and work through the material in ways best suited to their needs and capacity. The main emphasis is placed on understanding and speaking the language, but due attention has been paid to the importance of reading, especially for interpreting instructions and seeking information, and of writing, for such practical tasks as filling in forms, making reservations and writing simple letters.

The author's introduction clearly explains the content and presentation of the course. The table of contents is specific and informative and the student may see at a glance the ground to be covered. It is advisable to study the introduction very closely, so as to make best use of the carefully structured teaching and reference material throughout the book.

Mastery of the spoken language presents one of the greatest problems to the student working alone; without considerable linguistic experience, it is impossible to develop an ear for the sounds and intonation of a language by reading the printed page. Each book contains a detailed and helpful guide to pronunciation but there is also a most useful adjunct in the form of a cassette, containing an introductory section on pronunciation, and all the dialogues in the book. All material is spoken by native speakers. This cassette is

invaluable for all languages in the Series, but for French it may be regarded as virtually indispensable. If the admirable pronunciation-guide in *Mastering French* is intelligently used in conjunction with the cassette, the traditional difficulties of acquiring a good French pronunciation should be overcome.

The authors of the language-books in the Master Series, who are all gifted and successful teachers of individuality and experience, have tried to ensure that those who use these books thoughtfully may experience the pleasure of successful language study without the direct intervention of a teacher. All concerned with the project hope that the books will establish for the learner a continuing involvement with the infinite variety and endless fascination of languages.

BETTY PARR

Editorial Consultant

INTRODUCTION: HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This introduction to French is intended for complete beginners in the language but it also offers a valuable refresher course for those who have previously learned a little French but now find that it has grown 'rusty'.

As explained in the Series Editor's preface, the book has a dual aim. Firstly, it seeks to provide a grounding in the basic skills of communicating in French for students intending to spend holidays in France, for those who are involved in business activities with French companies, and for those individuals and families who participate in the expanding number of 'twinning' between French and English communities.

Secondly, this course offers the first stages in French for students whose aims may not be solely concerned with the spoken language and 'survival' situations, but who wish to acquire the basis of a more formal knowledge of the grammar and structures of the language with a view to developing a reading knowledge, or to extend writing skills at a later date. Existing beginners' courses seem to divide between those that teach how to 'survive abroad' and those which are wholeheartedly academic. The twofold aim of this course will be clear right from the contents page through all the chapters.

On the contents page you will see that each chapter is presented under three headings:

- 1 *Theme*: this expresses the main communicative aim of the chapter.
- 2 *Topic*: this sets out the situation or area of information in which the communicative theme is developed through dialogues.
- 3 *Grammar*: here the main elements of formal grammar are listed.

Those students whose main concern is with speaking and understanding will probably not wish to pursue the details of the grammatical points raised. Therefore each chapter presents the exercises in two sections. Firstly, there is, for all students, a section which is concerned with the main communicative aims of the chapter. Secondly, there is a section which is optional, and which provides practice of a more formal kind, such as translation, for those wishing to gain greater insight into the grammatical forms.

Similarly the section in each chapter entitled 'Explanations' sets out the essential information required to cope with the grammatical

material of the chapter. In addition, however, each chapter refers the student to the grammatical summary at the back of the book for further details.

Students can obviously choose their own learning strategy; either to work methodically through all the material from chapter to chapter, or to cover the communicative material first and return to the details at a later date.

Selecting the content of a first language book is always difficult, since learners' needs vary considerably, but the proposals of the Threshold Level of language learning published under the auspices of the Council of Europe, have provided a useful point of reference for this book as also has the basic vocabulary of 'Le Français Fondamental' (Level 1).

ORGANISATION OF CHAPTERS

Each chapter begins with a series of dialogues, or, in some cases, other material such as letters, which introduce the new topics and grammatical structures.

The vocabulary follows, with English equivalents, organised so that there is a section of vocabulary for each dialogue, to make reference easier. Each of these sections is divided into sub-sections grouping together (i) useful expressions, (ii) nouns, grouped according to their gender, and (iii) other words. All the vocabulary lists present the words in the order in which they occur in the dialogues. Next follows a series of explanations which clarify new grammatical material, and finally come the exercises, presented in two sections as has already been explained.

As described in the series editor's preface there is also a cassette to help students who are using this book. The cassette contains an introductory section on pronunciation and all the dialogues in the book. Sections of the book included on the cassette are indicated by the symbol .

REFERENCE MATERIAL

In the reference section the student will find the dialogues of the first five chapters fully translated, to assist with initial learning problems. A key provides answers to all exercises and a grammar reference section presents a summary of all the grammatical forms introduced in

the book. A guide to pronunciation is provided as a supplement to the cassette. Finally a short bibliography is provided to guide the student in the choice of further reference material and opportunities for hearing French.

TYPOGRAPHY

It is an aid to studying a foreign language from a textbook if the language can be distinguished easily from the English text. In this book the French is therefore set in a different typeface:

Votre passeport, s'il vous plaît.

This will help the reader, particularly in explanatory sections where the two languages occur side by side.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the preparation of this book I have relied heavily upon the help and advice of a number of French friends, but in particular my thanks are due to Madame Isabelle Rodrigues, who read the text with meticulous care and a native speaker's eye for correct French. I would also like to thank Miss Caroline James for typing the manuscript, with great care and considerable speed, and my secretary, Mrs Lila Backhouse, for her willingness to shoulder whatever burdens I push in her direction. Above all my thanks and appreciation are due to my wife Elisabeth for her never-failing support and concern at every stage of preparation and writing.

E. N.