

## “FrancoForniens: Bringing Oral History into the French-language classroom”



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### BLC Fellows’ Report

#### PROJECT BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE:

One of the perennial questions facing both language and literature instructors is how to teach “culture” *through* language. “Culture” is, of course, a notoriously hard-to-define, tantalizingly complex concept. What constitutes “culture” or “French culture,” for example, is hardly universally agreed upon. As *Cultura*<sup>1</sup>- creator Gilberte Furstenberg points out, language teachers have long attempted to “classify” culture in hopes of better integrating it into our curricula, but such classification schemes do not prevent it from being elusive and difficultly quantifiable (Furstenberg, *Making Culture the Core of the Language Class: Can It Be Done?*, 2010, p. 329). This means that in spite of our best intentions as language teachers, we often “focus [...] on language teaching, leaving ‘culture’ at the periphery [...] with the result that language and culture are divorced from each other” (*Ibid*, p. 329). In the same vein as *Cultura*, this project assumes that language and culture are inextricably linked, and that culture cannot be “taught” in the traditional sense, but that it must be “experienced by learners as they co-construct cultural knowledge with others” (Chun, 2014, p. xiii). This project seeks to invert our standard priorities,

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<sup>1</sup> MIT faculty Sabine Levet, Shoggy Waryn, and Gilberte Furstenberg first developed *Cultura* in 1997 at MIT. It is one of the first examples of “online intercultural exchanges” or “telecollaboration,” in which online communication tools were used “to bring together language learners in different countries to learn the others’ language and culture” (See O’Dowd, 2010, as cited in Chun, 2014, p. xii). Students were asked to fill out questionnaires and these were used as a starting place for online discussions about culture; students then responded to one another in their native languages (MIT students in English, French students in French), engaging in a bilingual exchange about various cultural topics. This model has since been emulated in a number of different institutions, countries, and languages.

as it is no longer about “teaching language followed by culture” but rather teaching “language within a real cultural context, language within culture” (Furstenberg, 2010, pp. 331-332).

Given that language is a symbolic representation of culture, our problem as language and literature teachers is not only *how*, but *which* languages to represent. As Claire Kramsch has noted, this is more often than not a question of not of *which* but *whose* language should be represented:

“Who is entitled to speak for whom, to represent whom through spoken and written language? Who has the authority to select what is representative of a given culture: the outsider who observes and studies that culture, or the insider who lives and experiences it? According to what and whose criteria can a cultural feature be called representative of that culture?” (Kramsch, 1998, p. 9)

Very similar problems have faced the field of history at large: the question is not only which histories deserve to be represented, but *whose* histories: whose stories have dominated the telling of history? Whose stories have historically been downplayed or left out altogether? Oral History is an approach to documenting culture that intentionally showcases the voices of everyday people; this bottom-up approach assumes that the lives and memories of everyday people offer valuable insight into the experience of history. For our purposes, it also offers a valuable snapshot of a given individual’s “language” and how they experience culture at a given point in time.

In my Berkeley Language Center Fellows’ Project,<sup>2</sup> entitled “FrancoForniens: Bringing Oral History to the French-Language Classroom,” I borrowed theory and techniques from oral history to build an archive of interviews with French speakers living in the Bay Area. These “FrancoForniens,” as one of my interviewees called herself, are necessarily cultural hybrids: individuals who do not unequivocally “represent” a given national culture, but rather, lay bare the complex networks of movement and exchange that lead to a given individual’s self-conscious expression and experience of culture(s). Rather than reasserting a homogenous vision of national cultural identity, these individuals ask us to reexamine what constitutes a given culture and how it is experienced on a human level. Through these interviews, students do not gain any “absolute” understanding of culture, but rather the understanding that culture is necessarily an interactive process, or “a highly complex, constantly moving object that is formed of many facets, sometimes quite contradictory” (Furstenberg, 2003, p. 120).

After attending the Advanced Oral History Summer Institute, offered by the Oral History Center at UC Berkeley in Summer 2016, I began interviewing a diverse population of local French speakers.<sup>3</sup> I asked them to reflect upon their experiences of mobility and cultural exchange. By focusing on others’ experiences of “culture” and indeed, “culture shock,” I built materials that encourage students to critically engage with the experience of cross-cultural exchange. This engagement not only prepares students for their future experiences of living and working abroad, but exposes them the diversity of perspectives already at play in their local communities—and in history and culture at large.

I first came to this project through the realization that there was a surprisingly lively local Francophone community in the Bay Area. My work as a French-English translator and interpreter has

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<sup>2</sup> I would like to express my most sincere thanks to the Berkeley Language Center for the generous funding and intellectual support that allowed me to undertake this project. I would like to express my gratitude to Rick Kern, Mark Kaiser, and Chika Shibahara, my cohort of BLC Fellows, including Matthew Kendall and Giuliana Perco, as well as visiting scholars to the BLC. Your input helped me to shape this project and to envision its future iterations.

<sup>3</sup> The Advanced Oral History Summer Institute was an intensive “crash course” in all things oral history, from the practical to the theoretical. Thank you to the institute director, Shauna Farrell, and the Oral History Center faculty and students, especially Cristina Kim and the participants in my small group cohort. With the help of the Institute, oral history went from being a side interest to a foundational component of this project.

brought me into contact with a number of organizations, like the East Bay Sanctuary Covenant, the Pacific Film Archive, the French Consulate, or the American Conservatory Theater, which shed light on just how prevalent French language and culture is in this region. Not only is San Francisco “America’s European City,” the favorite playground of wayward Parisians, but California itself is host to a number of Francophone immigrants, hailing from North Africa, the Caribbean, and all over the world. I often wondered how I could bring students into contact with—and encourage them to contribute to—these vibrant communities.

This ambition, however, requires a delicate balance, that is, an understanding not only of what students need, but what the interviewees themselves want. Most immigrants have a lot at stake in how their communities get narrated or how their voices are expressed; we need only think of the sociocultural and political baggage that comes with terms applied to “immigrants,” i.e. terms like “expatriate,” “transplant,” “migrant,” or even “illegal” or “undocumented.” Indeed, I am already making ideological choices by choosing to represent “FrancoForniens”: this is a population of people who are living and working in California, who can be characterized by their transnational mobility, and who, as a result, already have exposure to multiple cultures and have developed a kind of transcultural awareness.

With the high-minded idealism of a literary scholar, I initially intended to use critical everyday studies and ethnographic cinema<sup>4</sup> to create materials for teaching “history” in foreign-language classrooms. Not just “history,” but “*Histoire avec sa grande hache*”: a pun writer Georges Perec uses to play off of the double meaning of [a], which would designate both “history with a capital ‘H’” and “history with its big axe” (Perec, 1975, p. 17). I had hoped to use everyday stories to document the broader historico-cultural circumstances, like political instability and violent conflict, that lead to travel, expatriation, and immigration. After attending the Advanced Oral History Summer Institute, however, I realized that this project was too ambitious for a handful of reasons. Not because this material is too advanced for undergraduate or language students, but because producing these interviews would require a more extensive timeline. It would require finding appropriate interviewees and interviewing them multiple times. Most importantly, developing the kind of close relationship with them that would allow us to discuss such sensitive material. In a university setting, this is as much a legal and ethical concern as it is a practical constraint.<sup>5</sup>

#### PROJECT GOALS AND METHODOLOGY:

The goals of my project evolved to be less about teaching “history” per se, and more about using oral history methodology as a way into culture—a means of getting to students to think about how people understand and analyze their own experiences. Oral history is still a relatively new field, and

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<sup>4</sup> Critical everyday studies is a broad theoretical field, including the study of space and the everyday experience of space; it includes a whole host of thinkers, notably beginning in the sociological work of Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau. Ethnographic cinema, in the French vein, refers to thinkers of the tradition of *cinéma-vérité*, and more particularly sociologists such as Edgar Morin and filmmakers such as Jean Rouch, Pierre Perrault, and Chris Marker. A convergence between ethnographic cinema and oral history can be seen in the desire to showcase the perspective of the interview subject; both disciplines share an interest in asking people how they would like to be represented or documented.

<sup>5</sup> Getting institutional human subjects approval is a rigorous process, one that, for good reasons, makes it difficult to work with vulnerable populations, like those at risk of legal or political repercussions. As Erin Jessee has shown, highly politicized research settings also expose the limits of oral history, given that the interviewer and interviewee’s agendas are often diametrically opposed, making “shared authority”—or the coproduction of knowledge—impossible or even undesirable (Jessee, 2011, p. 293). For these reasons, certain interviewee populations, like recent asylees, had to be eliminated from my study.

most discussions of oral history and pedagogy center around K-12 classrooms and heritage speaker classrooms. Pedagogically-driven oral history projects vary widely in subject matter and scope, ranging from an entire generation's reaction to a historical crisis (as in "What did you do in the War, Grandma?") to a more localized history of a given community (see the Fox Point Project undertaken at Brown University).<sup>6</sup> Usually, it is assumed that students will interview family, friends, or community members about moments in their lives that relate to classroom materials. In heritage speaker classrooms, oral history is used as a means of bringing students out of their shells and allowing them to analyze their own experiences in relationship to American history and contemporary American politics and culture. There appears to be relatively little research on oral history in second-language classrooms, at either the K-12 or university level.<sup>7</sup> Oral history, I am positing, offers a compelling resource for teaching culture, without sacrificing its ambiguity, variability, or complexity. While the status of "culture" in the foreign language classroom may appear a timeless debate, it is one that is all too urgent in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, when our increasingly globalized lives necessitate that students master some degree of transcultural competence.<sup>8</sup>

Methodologically, I drew on a few key principals of oral history: 1) historical subjects are not passive and 2) oral history interviews are a "shared," "intersubjective" creation between historian and subject. First, as oral historian Steven Sloan has pointed out, interviewees are not passively responding to questions, but they are actively "working to frame or reframe not only what they tell, but the manner in which they tell it" (Sloan, 2012, p. 310). Interviewees are only all too aware of the fact that they are presenting their experiences *for others*; they are sensitive not only to the reaction of the interviewer, but to general publicity of their statements—how eventual consumers of their interviews, like students, might respond or react. In Kramsch's terms, we might consider interviewees as having their own unique "discourse accent," which is constantly being renegotiated in the interview setting. "Discourse accent" might include:

[...] not only the grammatical, lexical, and phonological features of their language (for example, teenage talk, professional jargon, political rhetoric) [that] differentiate them from others, but also the topics they choose to talk about, the way they present information, the style with which they interact [...] (Kramsch, 1998, p. 9)

Discourse accent is thus influenced by the communities in which speakers circulate, as well as the interview setting itself. Interviews are constantly situating themselves as speakers of a given language, a fact which is only exacerbated by the conscious and unconscious choices they make in the seemingly "spontaneous" environment of the interview setting.

Second, this attention to the interviewee's experience has led oral historian Lynn Abrams argues that oral histories are indeed an "intersubjective" creation, in which "participants cooperate to create a shared narrative." This means that the interview is far from a "neutral" context, and that on the contrary:

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<sup>6</sup> See What did you do in the War, Grandma? South Kingston High School, Rhode Island, 1997 [http://cds.library.brown.edu/projects/WWII\\_Women/](http://cds.library.brown.edu/projects/WWII_Women/) and Fox Point Oral Histories, Brown University <http://library.brown.edu/cds/foxpoint/>. See also Annex I, for Additional Resources on Oral History.

<sup>7</sup> This is perhaps because these projects are time-consuming and difficult to implement in any overburdened curriculum, but certainly in part because "culture" still has an uncertain status in the language classroom.

<sup>8</sup> See, for instance, the May 2007 Modern Language Association Report, "Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World," <https://www.mla.org/Resources/Research/Surveys-Reports-and-Other-Documents/Teaching-Enrollments-and-Programs/Foreign-Languages-and-Higher-Education-New-Structures-for-a-Changed-World>.

Memory stories are manufactured in an interview environment pulsating with influences—ranging from the words and inflections, moods and the agenda of the interviewer, to the interaction between interviewer and narrator. The narrator’s responses—the language used, the emotions expressed, the tone adopted—will be influenced by the immediate interview context (Abrams, 2010, pp. 54-55).

This means that by collaboratively undertaking an interview about “culture,” my interviewees and I were necessarily producing a shared product; my interviewees were likely influenced by my presence and my biases as an interviewer. This is inherent in the kinds of questions I asked and the kinds of subjects I find interesting as a doctoral student and GSI in French. For example, my knowledge of French and American culture and politics and preexisting relationships with some my interviewees allowed me to pursue topics that might have been too controversial for other interviewees, like the question of racial segregation in Oakland, which Moko posed in his interview.<sup>9</sup> The interviewees were also likely influenced by the audience of the project (which I described as predominately UC Berkeley French-language students and instructors), as well as its purpose. This can also be seen in the language of my promotional materials, which inevitably influenced my subject population.<sup>10</sup>

In my interview process, I incorporated this notion of an interview as an “intersubjective creation.” For this reason, I tried not to “force” a conversation and not to ask uncomfortable or unsolicited questions. While I would nevertheless push my subjects to analyze or expand upon their statements, I was attentive to their reaction and experience. The idea was to let them “lead” the conversation and to “follow” the conversation where it went. That said, I tended to ask each participant a general panel of questions: I asked them to describe their hometown, their education, and what they were doing in California. I initiated a discussion of their experiences with other cultures, especially American and Californian culture. Naturally, given the recent American presidential campaign (and several upcoming European presidential campaigns), the conversation tended to touch on national and global politics.

#### INTERVIEWEE SELECTION:

When I selected speakers, I knew I would be limited to adult volunteers, but I wanted to select interviewees from a variety of backgrounds, pointing to the diversity of native French speakers today. I was weary of placing speakers of opposing backgrounds alongside one another and of giving each a fair opportunity to express him/herself. For example, one researcher in my Oral History Institute small group, worried that her father, a French transplant who had been living in San Francisco since the 1970s, would appear uninteresting next to recent asylees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This is a legitimate concern, one that echoes my earlier aside about “representativity”: what kinds of dialogues would come to be formed between participants, who never met in real life, but whose stories would be housed in the same space? What conclusions would students draw from these “virtual” dialogues?

The people who volunteered to participate in the project fell into a couple of demographic groups: most of my volunteers were women; most were young people in their 20s or 30s; many were French expats living in San Francisco, for variable amounts of time (from a few years to permanently); many were visiting scholars or students at Berkeley; a few were French teachers; and a few had American partners or families. Understandably, interviewees from more vulnerable subject populations did not volunteer or declined to participate. While I will continue interviewing in upcoming semester, I began by focusing on individuals who would be most relatable for students: young people living and working in the Bay Area. In the Fall of 2016, I conducted six interviews with eight interviewees: all were

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<sup>9</sup> This interview is currently in the process of being edited and will soon be available on the LFLFC website.

<sup>10</sup> See Annex 2.

in their 20s and 30s; all were well educated, having at least a Bachelor's (or License) in their relevant field; 2 worked in tech in San Francisco and 5 were graduate students or visiting scholars living in the East Bay; 6 self-identified as French, although they hailed from diverse socioeconomic and geographic backgrounds (including various suburbs of Paris, la Bosse, and la Guadeloupe); 1 woman came from Madagascar.

#### PILOTED MATERIALS AND STUDENT RESPONSE:

After several interviews, I designed an exercise on “culture shock” and piloted the material, teaching for a full 50-minutes in two different French 4 classrooms.<sup>11</sup> My materials timed out perfectly with the French 4 curriculum, given that students were currently in a textbook unit called “La France vue d’ailleurs,” about France from the perspective of outsiders. Our discussions would “flip” this narrative, talking about the US from the outside. I excerpted clips from two different interviews, in which I asked my interviewees to narrate an experience of “*choc culturel*” (“culture shock”) or “*dépaysement*,” a French expression that evokes the experience of being “out of place” or in unfamiliar surroundings. In preparation for viewing the interviews, I asked students to consider moments in their lives during which they had experienced “culture shock”: what was the context? Where were they (in another country, city, or state)? How did they feel and how did they react? While I encouraged students to analyze banal, everyday situations (in the event they had not traveled much), they had no shortage of examples. In the first class, one student described visiting his extended family in Bangladesh and being surprised by the local poverty and lack of basic resources; another student described her “outsider” experience as a Puerto Rican in the US. In the second class, a Japanese student talked about American versus Japanese schools; other students pointed to differences between Northern and Southern California. I then asked students to compare their understandings of “culture shock” with “*dépaysement*,” beginning with the literal translation of the latter, being “out of one’s country.” What does it mean to be deprived of one’s “country,” or to find oneself without one’s “country”? After we discussed our experiences and the expressions, I pointed out that “*dépaysement*,” unlike “culture shock” can sometimes have a positive valence; French speakers often happily seek out this particular experience of being uprooted or displaced (“*rechercher le dépaysement*”).

While I initially intended to play multiple interviews in each class, I quickly found that the complexity of the materials and the students’ listening comprehension made this difficult. I ended up showing one or two clips, from a single interviewee, to each class. The clips I showed students, and that I will be showing you today, come from interviews with “Mariam” and “Aurore.” (All of the names I will be using are pseudonyms to protect my participants’ anonymity.) First is “Mariam,” a young woman from Madagascar, who did her undergraduate degree at a liberal arts college in the US, and is now working on a Master’s in Development Practice at Berkeley. Next is “Aurore,” a visiting scholar in theoretical chemistry, who works at a lab in Berkeley. In interviewing “Mariam,” I found her to be a “cultural ambassador” of sorts: she knows a lot of factual information about Madagascar off the top of her head, as if she had described it before; however, given that she has been studying in predominately Anglophone environments for the last few years, she said that discussing these questions in French was a refreshing experience for her. “Aurore,” on the other hand, was slightly more spontaneous and unabashed in describing her experiences; it seemed that she was thinking out loud about some of these questions for the very first time.

For both clips, my broad learning goal was for students to understand how variable and how personal experiences of culture shock can be for any given speaker. I hoped that they would be

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<sup>11</sup> Thank you to Daniel Hoffmann for generously offering up both his classroom, his time, and of course, his students.

surprised by what “Mariam” and “Aurore” found “shocking” in American culture, and that this would, in turn, offer them some insight into French and Francophone and their own cultures. For the first clip, from “Mariam,” I wanted students to analyze Mariam’s initial experience of culture shock, as someone from Madagascar, and contrast this with later experiences in an American liberal arts college. I also hoped they would pick up on the centrality of speaking another language to understanding another culture.<sup>12</sup> For the second clip, “Aurore,” I asked students to concretely describe differences between French and American work culture. I hoped they would pick up on how effortlessly Aurore moved from talking about “culture shock” in the American context, to “culture shock” with respect to her Muslim, North African friends.<sup>13</sup>

One of the immediate benefits of the interviews was exposing students to the interviewees’ themselves. Even though they are all native speakers of French, they are ethnically diverse and come from very different backgrounds. As I have already mentioned, my subjects can be distinguished by their mobility: these are people who have traveled widely. For this reason, they often relate their experience of culture shock in the US to their experiences of other cultures elsewhere. They also pose interesting questions for students about cultural representativity, seeing as they hardly reproduce stereotypes about “Frenchness” or “French-speaker-ness” and, as immigrants, they are already outsiders with respect to their own countries. My interview subject, Moko, is a perfect example of the hybrid cultural identity of “FrancoForniens”; while his family is from Algeria, he grew up mainly in Guadeloupe and was educated in France. This hybridity even extends to his intellectual interests: he is a doctoral candidate in law at a French university and a visiting scholar in the Philosophy Department at Berkeley.

After the clip, I asked students to describe and analyze how the interviewee experienced “culture shock.” Students who viewed “Mariam’s” interview instantly responded to the clip. They found her easy to understand and enjoyed her humor with respect to her own experiences. They immediately understood how everything would seem “big” to someone who came from the island country of Madagascar. What they found even more relatable, however, was her humorous description of learning another language. The students who viewed “Aurore’s” interview had more difficulties with the material, given the implicit cultural context and the speed inherent to Aurore’s Parisian accent. They did not immediately pick up on what she found surprising about the American workday, with the exception of the fact that French people take many “breaks.” After a second viewing, they understood that Aurore liked coffee, but they did not fully understand why she would have found American work culture so surprising. In future versions of this “culture shock” exercise, I will provide the clips prior to class time, so that students have ample opportunities to repeat or to slow down clips as necessary. I will also provide additional information about Madagascar (where it’s located, population size, etc.), as well as recent legislation surrounding the 35-hour French work week.

In concluding my classroom sessions, I asked students 1) whether or not they found the materials helpful or interesting and 2) what kinds of questions they would have asked my interviewees. Their feedback was generally positive, and I found their questions for interviewees insightful. One student, for example, suggested that I asked interviewees what they missed the most about their home countries—an everyday question that can elicit very complicated responses.

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<sup>12</sup> For the first clip, please see: “Mariam parle du choc culturel (truncated 2),” hosted by the LFLFC: <http://blcvideoclips.berkeley.edu/index.php/clip/cdetail/show/front/100771>. For French and English transcripts, please see Annex 3.

<sup>13</sup> For the second clip, please see: “Clip 2: “Aurore parle du choc culturel (truncated),” hosted by the LFLFC: <http://blcvideoclips.berkeley.edu/index.php/clip/cdetail/show/front/100769>. For French and English transcripts, please see Annex 3.

## THE INTERVIEW ARCHIVE AND FUTURE RESEARCH

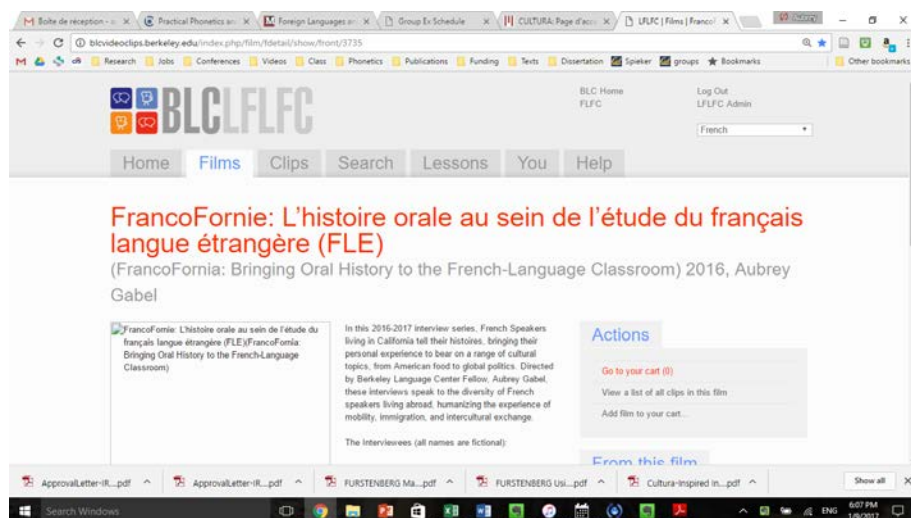


Figure 1. “FrancoFornie: L’histoire orale au sein de l’étude du français langue étrangère (FLE)” on the LFLFC website.

My interviews are currently housed in the Berkeley Language Center’s Library of Foreign Language Film Clips (LFLFC).<sup>14</sup> Conceived by Mark Kaiser at UC Berkeley, the LFLFC currently houses 59 French-language films and

1,999 French-language individual film clips, alongside films and clips in 14 other languages. The film clips automatically include synopses and vocabulary and are tagged with salient linguistic and cultural features, especially those to relevant foreign language learners (like apologies or greetings). Instructors can also choose to provide transcripts, captions, and subtitles for a given clip, and clips can be slowed down to half-speed to allow for maximum comprehension.

As I continue working on this project in spring of 2017, I plan on collecting more interviews and continuing to add them to the LFLFC French-language clip database. I will also incorporate these interviews into a semester-long oral history pedagogical program, which I will be piloting in the French 35, or Practical French Phonetics curriculum. It is my intent to use this program to teach critical cultural analysis in the French-language classroom.

I will base my pedagogical materials on *Jalons-histoire*, a French-language database of cultural and historical materials produced by the *Institut National de l’Audiovisuel* (INA), created for use in the national French educational system. *Jalons-histoire* is organized in dual format, including both a “médiathèque” and an “eduthèque.” The “médiathèque” categorizes short videos (5-10 min) by

chronology, geographical location, title, and theme; this section can be searched for short-term activities related to a given historical moment.

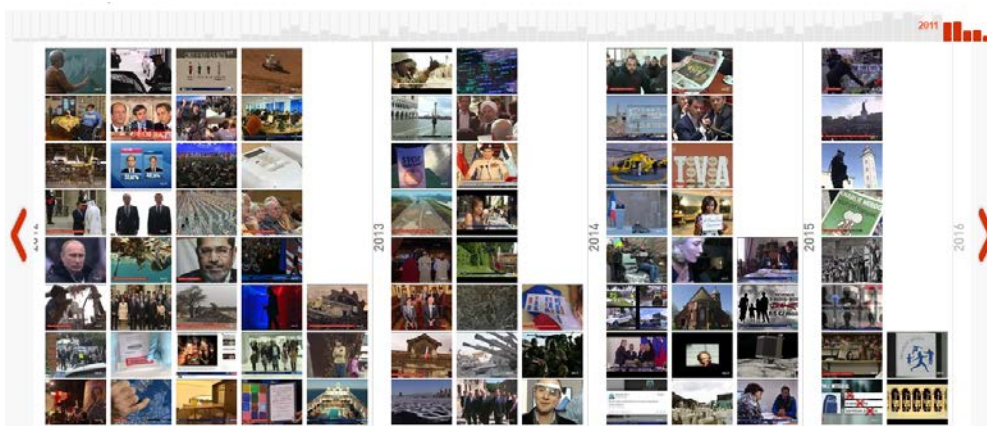


Figure 2. *Jalons-histoire* “médiathèque.”

<sup>14</sup> See “FrancoFornie: L’histoire orale au sein de l’étude du français langue étrangère (FLE),” or “FrancoFornia: Bringing Oral History to the French-language classroom,” a “series” title under which several “episodes” of the project can be found: <http://blcvideoclips.berkeley.edu/index.php/film/fdetail/show/front/3735>.



The “eduthèque,” on the other hand, is categorized by “parcours pédagogiques,” or “pedagogical units,” which bring together related audiovisual materials under broad thematic rubrics (such as “political life” or “economy and society”). Both include videos with transcripts and suggested activities. Some exercises are supplemented with visual materials or historical documents (such as newspapers). *Jalons-histoire’s* dual format is the perfect format for teaching culture through oral history interviews, given that it allows instructors to tailor a specific thematic question to both short- and long-term classroom projects. In this way, instructors can integrate individual interviews where possible in a preexisting curriculum, or they can use a series of interviews to design a syllabus around related cultural topics.

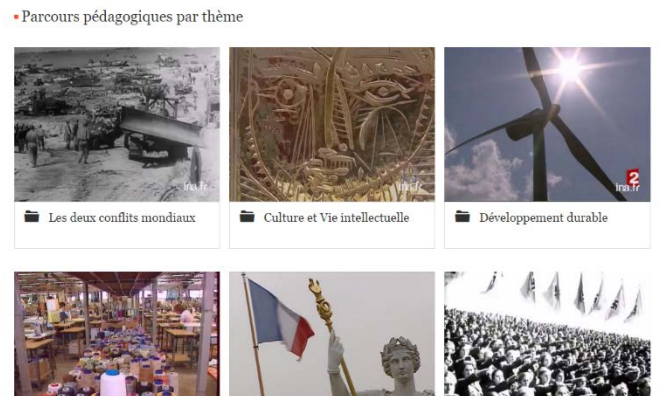


Figure 3. *Jalons-histoire*, “éduthèque.”

In this fashion, the long-term pedagogical program I will be piloting this spring will include a series of two- to three-week thematic units. Each unit will be centered around a series of clips from FrancoFornien interviews. Evidently, the themes will be tailored according to the content of the oral history interviews; for example, I am already envisioning other thematic units on topics such as “Living in California,” “Political Life,” “College Towns,” and “Hometowns,” based on interviews I have done so far. That said, I also intend to borrow from *Jalons’s* categories and to build off of existing French phonetics textbook materials.

I will pair these thematic units with hands-on training in the theory and practice of oral history. For their final project, French Phonetics students are already expected to conduct a one-on-one interview with a native French speaker and to analyze this person’s oral French. This exercise is intended to be a practical application of linguistic principles acquired over the course of the semester. I will incorporate transcultural awareness into this project, by asking students to critically engage with their interviewees as cultural subjects. With the help of exposure to FrancoForniens and theoretical materials on oral history, they will collaboratively develop interview questions for their interviewees; they will also be required to interview one another before interviewing a native French speaker. These experiences of watching interviews, conducting them, and being interviewed themselves will help them to understand oral history from multiple angles. It is my hope that an extended oral history project will help them to develop critical insights into French and Francophone cultures. Finally, it will provide them a concrete example of how everyday history or cultural analysis works.

## CONCLUSION

By bringing oral history into the language classroom, I hope to foster another environment in which students become the creators of their own cultural knowledge. When the voices of everyday French speakers intervene in the classroom, the teacher is no longer the sole authority on culture, but rather a facilitator, who “helps students bring patterns to light and to gradually put together the cultural puzzle—in other words, to teach the students to ask the right questions themselves and to facilitate the experience of self-learning” (Furstenberg, 2010, p. 331). With exposure to everyday people within their own communities, students learn not only to humanize the experience of culture, but to develop

intercultural competence. This competence allows them to critically evaluate culture in its manifold forms.

In a similar vein, Anne Valk, who designed the Fox Point Oral History project, points out that one of the great benefits of oral history is that students become active historical subjects:

[...] oral history projects can help young people become not solely passive consumers but also active producers of historical knowledge, preservers of its legacy, and engaged members of their communities. (Valk, 2001, pp. 154-155)

Our goal as language and literature instructors should be to train students to be active, contentious and critical consumers of culture—in second languages and beyond. By bringing oral history to the French-language classroom, we are asking students to produce cultural knowledge, to preserve its legacy, and to be engaged members of their own communities.

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## ANNEXES:

### ANNEX 1: Additional Resources on Oral History and Sample Oral History Projects

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#### **Additional Resources on Oral History**

Hickey, M. (1999). *Bringing History Home: Local and Family History Projects for Grades K–6*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

The Oral History Association: <http://www.oralhistory.org/>

The Oral History Center, University of California, Berkeley:

<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/libraries/bancroft-library/oral-history-center>

The Oral History Center's Advanced Summer Institute:

- <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/libraries/bancroft-library/oral-history-center/summer-institute>  
 “Oral History and Story-Sharing Resources: An Annotated List of Websites, Books and Programs.”  
 California Stories: The California Council for the Humanities.  
<http://www.calhum.org/files/uploads/other/Oralhistoryandstorysharingresources.pdf>
- Wood, L. “A Guide to Using Oral History.” Pearson Education, Inc.  
[http://www.phschool.com/eteach/social\\_studies/2003\\_04/essay.html#Bibliography](http://www.phschool.com/eteach/social_studies/2003_04/essay.html#Bibliography)
- Zembrywycki, S., Jesse, E., Beattie, E., Bean, A., Landry, M., Baines, S. (2011). “Oral History and Adult Community Education: Notes from the field.” *Oral History Review* 38.1, 120-135.

### Sample Oral History Projects:

- “Been Here So Long” Selections from the WPA American Slave Narratives  
<http://newdeal.feri.org/asn/asn00.htm>
- Documenting the American South, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill <http://docsouth.unc.edu/>  
 Fox Point Oral Histories, Brown University <http://library.brown.edu/cds/foxpoint/>  
 Histoires de vie, Montréal. Montreal Life Stories. <http://www.lifestoriesmontreal.ca/>  
 Telling their Stories, Oral History Archives Project. The Urban School of San Francisco.  
<http://www.tellingstories.org/index.html>
- Voices from the Dust Bowl: the Charles L. Todd and Robert Sonkin Migrant Worker Collection, 1940-1941 <https://www.loc.gov/collections/todd-and-sonkin-migrant-workers-from-1940-to-1941/about-this-collection/>
- The Whole World Was Watching: an oral history of 1968 <http://cds.library.brown.edu/projects/1968/>  
 What did you do in the War, Grandma? South Kingston High School, Rhode Island, 1997  
[http://cds.library.brown.edu/projects/WWII\\_Women/](http://cds.library.brown.edu/projects/WWII_Women/)

### ANNEX 2: Call for Participants for “FrancoForniens” project

#### **CFP : « Francophonie en Californie. » *L’histoire orale au sein de l’étude du français langue étrangère (FLE).***

Appel aux Francophones en Californie! Quelle est votre *histoire*? Dans le cadre des recherches effectuées au sein du Berkeley Language Center (BLC) et du Centre de l’histoire orale de la Bibliothèque de Bancroft, nous cherchons des francophones qui aimeraient être interviewé(es) à propos de leurs histoires, leurs mémoires, et leurs vies. Nous nous intéresserons en particulier à la vie d’expatrié(es) francophones aux Etats-Unis : Comment est votre vie d’expatrié(es) ? Quelles circonstances vous ont mené à déménager en Californie ? Quels sont vos sentiments à l’égard de « la vie californienne » ? Aimez-vous vivre et travailler en Californie ? Que pensez-vous des événements historiques actuels aux Etats-Unis, en France, et dans le monde ? Quelles *histoires* avez-vous à raconter?

Les participants contribueront des entretiens oraux qui feront partie d’une archive pédagogique en ligne dont les objectifs principaux seront : d’enseigner la culture et l’histoire françaises et francophones à partir de l’histoire orale et d’attirer l’attention sur les communautés francophones minoritaires dans la Bay Area et en Californie. Les entretiens seront enregistrés ou filmés, mais les participants seront anonymes et nous protégerons vos données personnelles et votre confidentialité. L’accès aux entretiens oraux sera permis seulement aux étudiants, enseignants, et professeurs de l’Université de Californie.

Pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez contacter : Aubrey Gabel, Doctorante, Email:  
[aubrey.gabel@berkeley.edu](mailto:aubrey.gabel@berkeley.edu)

## CFP: “Francophonies en Californie.” Bringing *l’histoire/les histoires* into the French-Language Classroom

Calling all Bay Area French speakers! What’s your story? As part of a Berkeley Language Center (BLC) research fellowship and the Bancroft Library’s Oral History Center Summer Institute, we are seeking French speakers who would be willing to be interviewed about their lives, their memories, and their stories. In particular, we would like to solicit the participation of French-speaking expatriates living and working in California: What is your life like as an ex-patriate? What circumstances brought you to California? How do you feel about living and working in the Bay Area? How do you feel about recent historical events in the U.S., France, and across the world? What *histoires* do you have to tell?

Participants will contribute oral interviews that will become part of an online pedagogical archive, whose principle objectives are as follows: to teach French and Francophone culture and history through oral history and to draw attention to minority French-speaking communities in the Bay Area and California at large. The interviews will be recorded or filmed, but participants will remain anonymous. All identifying personal information will remain strictly confidential and off-the-record. Access to the oral interviews will be limited to students, teachers, and professors at the University of California, Berkeley.

For more information, please contact: Aubrey Gabel, Ph.D. Candidate, Email: [aubrey.gabel@berkeley.edu](mailto:aubrey.gabel@berkeley.edu)

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### ANNEX 3: French and English transcripts for sample clips

#### Clip 1: “Mariam parle du choc culturel (truncated 2)”

C’était très bien. Il y avait beaucoup de choc... de choc culturel, bien sûr, mais j’ai beaucoup aimé l’expérience. J’ai trouvé que tout était en grand modèle. Par exemple, l’aéroport. L’aéroport, c’est très grand. Les routes, c’est très grand. Les plats qu’on t’amène au restaurant, c’est très grand. Tout est très grand. Mais euh... Ici c’est aussi ... c’était un peu dur en fait, l’adaptation, surtout au niveau du langage. Parce que moi au Madagascar, j’ai pas [je n’ai pas] vraiment parlé l’anglais là-bas. Parce que moi j’ai appris toutes les choses que je connais en français. Et puis à la maison on utilisait la malagasy, la malgache. Et puis, quand j’étais ici, c’était comme on me jetait vraiment dans... je ne sais pas ... dans une eau profonde que j’y connais rien... connaissais rien du tout. Il fallait que je m’assieds [je m’asseye] que prends [prenne] des notes et tout ça. Et parfois il y avait des professeurs qui me demandait quelque chose et je savais même pas ce qu’ils me demandaient et j’étais juste like « hi »...

*It was great. There was a lot of culture shock, sure, but I loved the experience. I found that everything was in large format. For example, the airport is big. The roads are big. Restaurant meals are big. Everything is big. Adapting to a new language was also difficult. In Madagascar, I didn’t really speak English. I learned everything in French. I spoke Malagasy at home. And when I arrived, it was like being thrown into a deep sea... I didn’t know anything. I had to sit down and take notes and everything. Sometimes, professors asked me something, and I didn’t even know what they said, and I was just like “hi.” But as I was exposed to the language, I started to make friends, who didn’t have any trouble correcting me if I made mistakes or ... to practice with. It was just a problem of practice, of not having practiced enough. Even if in Madagascar, I had Anglophone friends, they went to great lengths to make sure I understood. But when I was here, everyone spoke normally... no one really made a lot of effort or spoke really slowly so that I could understand.*

## Clip 2: “Aurore parle du choc culturel (truncated)”

Le gros choc culturel, c’est les pauses... C’est qu’en France, si je te décris une journée typique. En gros, on arrive vers 9h00, vers 10h00-11h00 on fait une p’tite pause-café, vers 12h00-13h00 on mange. On prend peut-être une heure pour manger et puis vers 16h00 on refait une pause-café. Et on finit vers 19h00. Au moins, moi, je finis vers 19h00, je sais que cela dépend des endroits, mais pour moi, c’est ma journée type. Et ici, je commence à 9h00 et je finis vers 16h ou 16h30. Et en gros, la seule pause que je fais est à midi pour manger quoi, en trente minutes. Et là, je me dis du coup, la journée, elle paraît super courte. Parce qu’en général en France, on est sur les 35 heures, c’est sept heures par jour... de travail... de vraiment travail. Et quand je calcule tout ça, vu les pauses qu’on fait et tout ça fait vraiment sept heures. Et là, ta petite journée, ça fait aussi sept heures, mais parce que tu [ne] fais pas de pauses. Mais, c’est dur.

*The biggest culture shock for me was the breaks. On a typical day in France, one arrives around 9 am, takes a coffee break at 10 or 11 am, and eats around 12 or 1 pm. We take an hour for lunch, at 4 pm we do another coffee break, and we finish at 7 pm. Here, I start at 9 am, and I finish at 4 or 4:30 pm. The only break I take is at noon, to eat in 30 minutes. In France, the day seems really short. In France, we have a 35-hour work week, that’s seven hours a day of work. And when I calculate it, given all the breaks we take, it does really mean seven hours. Here, it’s also seven hours, but you don’t take any breaks, and that’s hard.*

Les pauses, ça coûte un peu plus de temps pendant la journée, mais au final, c’est pas [ce n’est pas] mal. Moi, je sais qu’avec mes collègues, on ramène des... cuisine nous-mêmes nos repas et on aime bien partager, on fait goûter... fin des trucs comme ça. Et ça, ça me manquait un peu. Surtout, ici j’ai pas [je n’ai pas] vu beaucoup de magrébins. Je dis ça parce que nous en fait on a beaucoup de magrébins et eux, c’est toujours, « eh, viens, viens donc. » Et eux, on [ne] les connaît pas, mais ils disent « viens, viens manger » et moi j’aime bien ça.

*Breaks take up a little more time in the day, but in the end, it’s not bad. I know that with my colleagues, we cook our own meals, we share, we taste... and I miss that a bit... Here, I haven’t seen that many North Africans. And I say that because we have a lot of North Africans, and they always say “come, come along!” Even if you don’t know them, they say, “come, eat!” and I like that.*