

Does an appreciation and an awareness of culture enhance the learning of a second language?

Cultural appreciation and awareness are important elements of second language learning.

As students learn French, they also increase their knowledge of the francophone culture in terms of its citizens' behaviours, customs, traditions, values, attitudes, and beliefs. Students not only discover features, characteristics and facts about the culture of Francophones, but they also increase their awareness of the cultural aspects of the French language. Students learn to recognize the variety of socio-cultural differences and socio-linguistic patterns through various cultural interactions and activities. Students develop an understanding of the differences in speech, courtesies, customs, facial expressions, body language, verbal expressions, accents, and dialects of the French Canadian culture and other French cultures.

Students also develop intercultural competencies that enable them to adapt and act appropriately in different cultural and social situations. They learn to appreciate, respect, and tolerate different viewpoints, values and customs. Students develop a range of intercultural skills that foster:

- a positive attitude towards Francophones and/or other cultural groups,
- an appreciation for the French language,
- a curiosity in regards to the francophone culture and their own culture,
- an openness to new or different perspectives,
- an appreciation of diversity,
- a sense of belonging and of inclusion,
- a respect for others,
- an empathetic spirit.

Students begin by exploring their own culture and are then introduced to the francophone culture (link) in their surrounding areas. The cultural focus then expands to regional, provincial, national and international communities.

Students are encouraged to relate the information to their own culture, to connect their new learning to their personal experiences and to recognize the cultural elements that influence their own lives. They explore their own lives and culture in comparison to the lives and cultures of Francophones from across Canada and the world.

Cultural appreciation and awareness enhance the learning of a second language. These aspects increase students' awareness of their own culture and that of others' cultures; further develop the students' curiosity in regards to their own culture and that of Francophones across the world; build on students' understanding of the French language and foster intercultural understanding.