

# Why French? – The Role of French Language Advocacy in the Classroom and Beyond

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## Abstract

The process of learning French begins with an individual decision, followed by perseverance to proficiency, and even fluency. In addition, French language learning is framed by the context of a multilingual world and society and informed by the significance of French as a global language and of French and Francophone culture in our history and around the world.

This article will examine French language advocacy as the defense of French with the ongoing support of all those interested in learning French in the classroom, in the community, and through traditional as well as online and social media. It will also examine the need for long-term advocacy to be present to support the entire process, from the decision to study French through proficiency, and in our communities, the workplace, and our society. While focused on French language and Francophone culture, it will also examine the work of French language advocates in terms of the role of French as a global language in a multilingual world.

Advocacy goals, including expanding affordability and accessibility of language learning for all learners through advocacy, initiatives, and support by language educators, along with language stakeholders and partners through the entire language learning process will also be examined. Methods discussed include blue ocean strategy, change management, and leadership initiatives by advocates and advocacy groups. Issues remain enrollment, affordability, availability, and persistent myths about the practicality of the French language major. Partnerships among educators and stakeholders, along with parents and communities provide a pathway forward.

The importance of French language advocacy lies primarily in its mission, but many of the core values that drive French language advocacy, along with the strategies and methods of effective advocacy, can be applied to advocacy for languages, education, and related areas.

**Keywords:** French, francophone, advocacy, language education

## 1. Introduction

The process of learning French begins with an individual decision, followed by perseverance to proficiency, and even fluency. In addition, French language learning is framed by the context of a multilingual world and society and informed by the significance of French as a global language and of French and Francophone culture in our history and around the world.

This article will examine French language advocacy as the defense of French with the ongoing support of all those interested in learning French in the classroom, in the community, and through traditional as well as online and social media. It will also examine the need for long-term advocacy to be present to support the entire process, from the decision to study French through proficiency, and in our communities, the workplace, and our society. While focused on French language and Francophone culture, it will also examine the work of French language advocates in terms of the role of French as a global language in a multilingual world.

Advocacy goals, including expanding affordability and accessibility of language learning for all learners through advocacy, initiatives, and support by language educators, along with language stakeholders and partners through the entire language learning process – from the initial decision through proficiency, will also be examined. Methods that will be discussed include blue ocean strategy, change management, and leadership initiatives by advocates and advocacy groups. Issues remain enrollment, affordability, availability, and persistent myths about the practicality of the French language major. Partnerships among educators and stakeholders, along with parents and communities provide a pathway forward.

The importance of French language advocacy lies primarily in its mission, but many of the core values that drive French language advocacy, along with the strategies and methods of effective advocacy, can be applied to advocacy for languages, education, and related areas.

### **French as a Global and Local Language in a Multilingual World**

French is a global and local language, spoken around the world, and a language in what is now the United States since the earliest years of the European era. It is a language that brings personal and professional benefits to the individual – as a language of international organizations and business, a language of research, and as a language representing a culture long recognized for ideas, the arts, media, as well as for a lifestyle and culture that have made France and Paris the leading destinations for global tourism (U of Virginia, n.d.; Gray, 2017; France Diplomacy, n.d.).

While the choice of a college major or course is complex, including factors of time and effort, along with financial and opportunity costs, the decision to study or to major in French is, essentially, a practical choice, with so many assets and advantages in a constantly changing global world and marketplace (Boer, 2023).

In the US, while French remains the second most studied language, French language programs, especially those at the college and university level, have experienced declining enrollments, and French programs everywhere are at risk (American Councils, 2017; MLA, 2023). Advocacy is needed more than ever – for language learning generally, and for French specifically, within the context of a globalized, interconnected, and multilingual world (Montlaur, 2019).

While often, attention is focused to the initial decision to study or to major in French, or sadly, on efforts save a program in danger of cutbacks or elimination, it is important to remember that advocacy needs to be present at each step in the language learning journey – from the decision to begin language study and choice of language or languages, through the challenges and plateaus inevitable in the lengthy process, and during transitions and turning points in language learning and use. Advocacy needs also to consider and to respond to the individual motivations of current and potential language learners, as well as those of past learners who may have temporarily stepped away from language learning, and by individuals and groups that may not have access to – or be able to afford - language learning.

There are two major decisions facing many students and prospective language learners of all ages – whether to learn an additional or heritage language, and – in the case of an additional language – which language to choose. Language educators, advocates, supporters, and stakeholders have a significant role to play at both of these key moments – encouraging multilingualism and language learning, and then possibly advocating for one or more specific languages. In addition, language learning is a long process – and motivation and persistence are key factors in successful language learning outcome – and it is essential for language advocates and supporters to be present every step of the way.

In an increasingly multilingual world, it is important to consider the importance of languages and language skills and language learning generally, but also the role of specific languages and cultures in our personal and professional lives. While English may be considered a global language, so too is French, spoken around the world. Other international languages certainly include Spanish and Portuguese, and Chinese has the most mother-tongue speakers.

This article will examine the role and importance of French in a globalized and multilingual world, as well in the US. French is a global language, spoken around the world. In the world and in the US, it is the second most learned language, after only English and Spanish respectively. However, it is important to consider why students at all levels learn French.

There are so many reasons to learn French, and these include personal and professional benefits, as well as societal and global benefits and the importance of France as a major global political and economic influence. In addition, it is important to consider the unique and individual reasons why we learn additional languages. As far as French is concerned, the choice to learn French may be because it is a language representing a culture of great appeal, or “soft power,” including ideas, the arts and media, along with lifestyle and culture (Nye, 2005). In addition to movies, music, media, food, fashion, and more, French is a language of ideas, philosophy, and humanistic values.

Perhaps most importantly, it is one of our heritage languages, playing a role in our US history since the earliest years of the European era, and the language of our oldest ally without whose aid and support the US may not have won its independence.

### **The Current Status of French in the US and Current Advocacy Initiatives**

French is a vibrant language in the US, spoken by mother tongue speakers from France and from around the world and by heritage language speakers across the country, most notably in Northern New England and Louisiana, although New York City alone is home to 80K Francophones, as well as by French language learners (Sicot, 2019). French is spoken in the home, within the home, and increasingly, in immersion programs in public schools in many areas of the US (Villa Albertine, n.d.).

As discussed, French is the second most studied language in the US at the K-12 and postsecondary levels, although enrollment has declined significantly at the college and university levels, and programs at all levels may face significant challenges. It is within this context that advocacy and linguistic and cultural initiatives must be considered.

Initiatives to support and expand the learning and use of French exist at the local, regional, and national levels, along with external partnerships and programs and cultural diplomacy, most notably on the part of France and Quebec. On the international level, the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) and the Centre de la Francophonie des Amériques (CFA) support French language and Francophone culture around the world and in the Americas, respectively. In the US, the American Association of Teachers of French (AATF) supports French language learning at the national, regional, and state level.

It is important not to underestimate the role and importance of soft power and cultural diplomacy. Soft power has been described as the influence of a culture, and cultural diplomacy as the efforts of governments and cultural entities to promote language and culture (Nye, 2005; Lane, 2013). France and its language and culture have long been known for soft power – the appeal of its culture and ideas, as well as of its lifestyle, and France is the worldwide leader in attracting international tourism (Gray, 2017; France Diplomacy, n.d.).

The French government has an international strategy to promote French based on learning, communicating, and creating in French (French Diplomacy, n.d.). It also supports French language and Francophone culture through numerous programs and initiatives, especially through the recently launched Lafayette Fellowships, as through its French for All, Professional French, and Dual-Language Immersion, along with materials and curricular support through CinéSchool and other programs and initiatives. In addition, the Alliance Française provides a wide array of learning and cultural activities for all ages both onsite and online throughout the US, and local and regional initiatives like the Franco-American Centre (FAC), the Nous Foundation, the Franco-American Foundation of Minnesota offer community-centered learning and cultural activities.

There is much that is being done, and many successes to applaud and recognize, yet French language learning, essential to maintain and to expand French language skills in the US, continues to face challenges at all levels and can benefit from advocacy and support from language educators and stakeholders.

## **2. Empirical Data**

French language advocacy has been successfully implemented in a variety of educational settings, including schools, colleges and universities, and community-based programs. In terms of schools, it is interesting to note that elementary and secondary schools have been not generally experienced the same decline in language enrollment as have institutions at the postsecondary level (AMACAD, 2017; American Councils, 2017, MLA, . This is especially important due to the need for continued access to language learning at increasingly advanced levels in order to achieve the degree of proficiency needed to effectively acquire professional language skills at the college and university level.

Examples include immersion programs in the US, whose benefits include academic, cognitive, professional and economic, and societal benefits (Fortune, n.d.; Jaumont, 2017). College and university programs that have developed a multidisciplinary approach to the language major, as well as courses aligned with a wide range of student interests, joint programs and double majors, professional language programs, and interdisciplinary collaborations among faculty have been more successful in sustaining enrollment (MLA, 2007; MLA, 2015; MLA 2023; CCI, n.d.). In community settings, both international initiatives like the Alliance Française, and local organizations like the Franco-American Centre offer a wide range of language learning and use activities, including both classes and sociocultural activities for all ages and interests, both in person and online.

### **The Power of Choice and The Decision-Making Process – Choosing French in the Classroom and Beyond**

The ability to choose among several alternatives can lead people to have control, which is linked to the likelihood of survival (Weinschenk, 2013). People generally enjoy having options, and the availability of several choices – including that of which language to study, or even to study a language at all - makes us feel powerful, unless, of course, there are, paradoxically, too many possible choices (Schwartz, 2016). In order to support and maintain existing opportunities to learn and to use French and to expand enrollments, it is essential to consider the elements that go into choosing French – among students and prospective students of all ages, among parents of pre-school and school-age children, and among adult learners.

Making the decision to learn and use French can viewed within the general framework of making choices and decisions generally. Additional factors may include whether the decision is made uniquely by the individual or is made for that individual -- by a parent, by curriculum requirements, or by an employer or workplace supervisor for example. In terms of the decision to learn and use French, it is important to consider both the process and the real and potential decision-makers and to bring all the information likely to play a role in the decision by all of them in a timely manner.

Choice theory is framed by basic human needs – to survive, to belong, to gain power, to be free, and to have fun. (Glasser, 1986; Glasser, 1998). This last may be of particular interest to teachers in the classroom, once students have chosen to study a language and then have chosen a particular language. Another challenge is that the steps in effective decision-making – understanding of the problem, specific objectives, alternatives, consequences, tradeoffs, uncertainties, risk tolerance, and linked decisions -- may not be widely understood. (Hammond, Keeney, & Raiffa, 1999). In addition, choice can be paradoxical, with an abundance of choices making the process more difficult, including happiness, missed opportunities, and disappointment as factors to be considered (Schwartz, 2016). Implications for the language educator include an abundance of course choices, along with the potential happiness and/or disappointment among students forced to choose among few, or a single option.

Decision-making usually includes elements of both rational thinking and intuition, along with unconscious factors we may be unaware of. The best choices generally include information-gathering, taking time, and considering alternatives. A challenge to good decision-making can be - paradoxically – the availability of too many choices (Psychology Today Staff, 2025). In terms of making the decision whether or not to learn French, it is important to ensure that students, prospective students, parents, and other decision-makers are given the necessary time and information to make a good decision and a valid choice and that they are not overwhelmed too many choices, as can be the case with many choices and little advisement when students are selecting among elective courses. Potentially, a choice could be made simply based on the course meeting time and modality (online/onsite, etc.) rather than on careful consideration. This is a case where advisement can make a real difference.

A good, or “smart” decision typically includes a clear understanding or definition of the problem, or decision to be made, of the objectives and goals of the decision-maker, of the available alternatives, and of the consequences of the decision or choice. The process can be made even more complex if tradeoffs are necessary and a particular choice may mean giving up or postponing another goal. Uncertainty may add to the stress of the decision-making process, as may our own anxieties and past experiences. (Hammond, Keeney, and Raiffa, 2015). Tradeoffs are a challenge, especially if a French course, generally an elective, meets at the same time as a required course. Even if a student takes an elective French course, continued study may not be possible due to the tuition and fee cost of taking an extra college course beyond a requirement. In addition, uncertainty and anxiety may discourage potential language learners who may have had less than positive experience in prior language learning due to an unrecognized learning disability, when the appropriate class environment and instructional strategies can support a successful learning outcome. The importance of goals should not be underestimated in choice and in the decision-making process, as choices and decisions make in alignment with personal and professional goals are the most effective (Tracy, 2025).

### **Transitions and Turning Points – Advocacy at the Crossroads**

Advocacy also needs to be present and proactive at the transitions and turning points in the journey of the language learner. These transitions include, but are not limited to, the progression from one level of educational institution to the next, transition out of an immersion program into a traditional foreign language program, a change in school districts or a family move, the transition from high school to college, from college to graduate school and the workplace, and many more, as in life.

Overall, advocacy needs to work to expand the opportunity to learn additional and heritage languages at all levels, as only a relatively small percentage of US public schools offer languages at the elementary school level, despite the fact the research has demonstrated the importance of access to continued language study (AMACAD, 2017). The transition from middle school to high school is also an opportunity for advocacy for both beginning and continuing students. The transition from high school to college or university can also result in a transition away from language learning due to schedules, major requirements, and even the expense of taking an extra elective course. At all of these levels, Pre-K – 16 partnerships can make all the difference in empowering a learner to reach proficiency and even fluency. The postsecondary level also offers opportunities for double majors, joint programs, and interdisciplinary collaborations and programs.

### **The Role of Advocacy in Supporting Sustainable Motivation – Attitudes, Aptitude, Persistence, and Individual Motivation**

Language learning success is driven by many factors, including aptitude, attitude, and motivation, including most importantly both instrumental and intrinsic or integrative motivation (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Gardner, 2010). Self-esteem is also a factor contributing to language learning success, in additional languages as an academic skill and in heritage language learning for both educational and personal/cultural reasons (Dornyei, 2010).

The choice for language learning, and specifically, for French – however important – is an essential first step, followed by the question of sustainable motivation and persistence. As language learning is a lengthy process, including inevitable plateaus, students may be lost at any point in the process.

In order to effectively address the challenge in developing and sustaining motivation in learning, it is important to engage the learner through the establishment of a linkage between the student's motivation and goals and the assignments and rewards they may be given (Pink, 2009). Individualization is key to sustaining motivation and engagement in language learning.

Advocacy needs to be present throughout the learning process, especially at those points in the curriculum where more effort may be required and/or where progress may become slower. Additional support may take the form of additional practice time to build skills and/or may include rewards or a change of pace, including but not limited to experiential learning, internships, study abroad (virtual or onsite), social and activities related to the target culture or in the target language. It is essential not to lose learners who have chosen French due to momentary discouragement and loss of motivation.

It is also necessary to focus on the wide range of motivations that drive interest in languages and in the learning of additional and heritage languages. In the case of the heritage language learner, it is necessary to honor regional forms of the target language and to develop partnerships with local language communities and/or with virtual communities relevant to the target language and its culture. In all language learning settings, it is essential to consider the personal and pre-professional reasons of learners, developing relevant learning and co-curricular activities.

### **The Role of Advocacy in Building Language Skills – Performance, Habit, Individual Motivation, and the Gifted Learner**

The nature and significance of performance are especially important for the language advocate. While performance and proficiency are often considered classroom activities and goals, performance is especially important in language advocacy, as even an impression in the mind of the learner that they may not be progressing at an acceptable rate toward proficiency may be enough to cause the learner to abandon language learning. Five propellers of performance the development of one's personal identity as a learner, along with awareness and development of purpose. Beliefs, habits, and community (Briceno, 2023). The advocate needs to work to encourage learning environments that support these drivers of performance and empower learners to achieve their individual language learning goals. The importance of student success and study strategies among advocacy goals should not be underestimated.

As the habit of using an additional language can play an important role in successful learning outcome, it is important for language advocates to encourage the development of the habit of bilingualism and multilingualism. Effective habits can begin as small or tiny changes in our routine and can grow to be transformative changes in the life of the learner (Fogg, 2020). It is also important for effective language advocates to understand the reasons that can drive habits and habit change and the importance of remaining true to the motivation and desired outcome of the learners, while building effective habits and routines to achieve them. (Duhigg, 2012, 2023).

Reasons for learning a language can vary widely, ranging from a desire to reconnect with a family or heritage language to a desire to travel or to work at the international level to change the world (Ossipov, 2000). In addition, personal and cultural interests, along with career and professional goal drive language learning and language learning persistence. As far as French is concerned, there is even the well-known term, Francophile, to describe those who admire and are drawn to all things French.

Educational programs respond to this broad array of motivations through multidisciplinary within the major, interdisciplinary collaborations among faculty, and curricular innovations, along with double majors and joint programs, and more (MLA, 2007; MLA, 2015; MLA. 2023).

Within every group of current and prospective language learners, there are likely to be gifted learners, and language advocacy needs to advocate for their specific needs, many of which are valid for all or most learners. For example, gifted learners may benefit from flexible study options, including independent study and online study, which would permit them to advance at their own pace, often more quickly (Johnson & Goree, 2005). It is also essential to consider individual motivations and learning styles in order to empower gifted and other learners to achieve the best possible learning outcome (Moyer, 2021). These options are also valid for learners in traditional classrooms and could potentially avoid boredom and the resulting lack of motivation and persistence. While important for all learners, the relation of the French Language and English may be especially important for gifted learners.

### **Advocacy Strategies – Change Management, Blue Ocean Strategy, and more**

The underlying principle, and driver, of change management is the importance of taking action in a timely manner, which has been described as a sense of urgency, further explained in terms of core change principles -- mindsets, attitudes, and leadership behaviors, and eight steps, with the goal of creating a sustainable culture of change within an organization -- 1. Create a sense of urgency, 2. Form a guiding coalition, 3. Develop a strategic vision, 4. Communicate the vision, 5. Enable action by removing barriers, 6. Generate short-term wins, 7. Sustain acceleration, and 8. Institute

change (Kotter, 2008; Leading Change, n.d.). Advocates also need to be aware of the role and nature of blue ocean strategy, creating new ways to learn languages and new groups of potential learners rather than competing with other curriculum areas (Kim & Mauborgne, 2005; Kim & Mauborgne, 2017).

In order to be effective, advocates must lead and influence current and prospective learners, as well as within their institutions and communities. They need to be able to create sustainable change in the language learning behaviors among those around them and beyond, and this includes focus on specific behaviors, active assistance and encouragement, development of motivation and a positive learning environment (Grenny, Patterson, Maxfield, McMillan, & Switzler, 2013). One form of leadership, agile leadership, composed of eco-, ego. And intuitive intelligence may be especially useful in language advocacy due to the complex environment in which advocacy typically takes place (Olivier, Holscher, & Williams, 2021).

### **Current Issues in Advocacy – Accessibility, Affordability, Enrollment, and more**

Language learning is not accessible to all, and often the cost of language learning makes it unaffordable (AMACAD, 2017). Only a relatively small percentage of US public elementary schools offer foreign language programs, and at the postsecondary level, students need to choose a language course and pay tuition fees. At all levels, language learners in educational institutions and in our communities need to consider the cost of language courses, weekend/summer learning, study abroad, etc. Therefore, it is essential that language advocates work to expand language learning opportunities in our free public schools and to develop scholarship and other funding opportunities for all interested learners.

Enrollment has become an issue central to advocacy (American Councils, 2017; MLA, 2023). While it may no longer be necessary to persuade the authorities and the community of the importance of French and the value of French language learning, it is imperative that classes have sufficient enrollment to ensure sustainability. It is essential that advocates focus not only on the significance of French and on the importance of French language learning, but also on the action steps needed to ensure sufficient enrollment in French language classes at all levels.

For students, prospective students, and even their parents, the choice of a college major is a source of serious discussion. Often there is a possible choice between a “practical” major and a major in a beloved area (De Boer, 2023). However, the decision is not as simple as might be imagined. On the one hand, double majors and joint programs, as well as interdisciplinary collaborations among faculty, may offer possible pathways for students talented, proficient, and interested in more than one subject area. On the other hand, it is also important to avoid over-reliance a practical, or apparently practical, major – which could be more or less practical depending on the vagaries of the marketplace. In addition, the skills learned in a French or language major include critical thinking, a global mindset, and cultural knowledge, all quintessential 21<sup>st</sup> century global skills.

While the decision-making process is important, information also plays a major role. Often potential learners and other decision-makers have incomplete or misleading information about the importance of French and even of language learning in general. It is, of course, essential to ensure that complete and accurate information is communicated to all during the decision-making process in a school or educational institution. Myths concerning languages may include an erroneous belief that everyone speaks English and that languages do not benefit the learner – while it is known that more than half of the world population does not speak English and that language learning brings cognitive, professional, and personal benefits to the learner. It is also a relatively easy language for English language speakers, sharing the same alphabet and much vocabulary (NFATC, n.d.).

In terms of the French language, potential students, their parents, and many school administrators may not realize that French is a global language, spoken in many countries around the world and that it is also a local language, spoken by many in the US. French and Francophone culture are known for literature and ideas, art, and architecture, along with many aspects of lifestyle and culture. Reflecting this, Paris and France are the leading international tourism destinations in the world. Lastly, France supported and aided the colonists in winning US independence from Britain. France has been a friend and ally of the US since that time, and the French presence in what is now the United States dates from the earliest years of the European era in the Americas.

### **Action Steps and Making the Case for French – From Information to Interest and Commitment; the Role of the Francophile, and the Importance of French as a Research Language**

All of the information that is available on the importance of languages and of multilingualism in a globalized and interconnected world, and in our personal and professional lives needs to be effectively communicated – not only to current and prospective students, to parents, and to school and university administrators, but also throughout our society through community initiatives, and online and social media. Much is already happening thanks to language educators, community groups, and external partners, but opportunities remain to communicate not only the cultural contributions

of French and Francophone culture and the benefits of French language and cultural knowledge, but also to reach those who may not yet realize both the benefits and the enjoyment of French language and Francophone culture. Podcasts, zoom meetings, and athletic, craft, and other events devoted to specific interests, and much more can bring French language and Francophone culture to many who may not have previously envisioned French as something for them.

While getting people interested may not be an easy matter, moving from interest to commitment can be even more challenging – requiring the individual to identify their passion, to take the first step – of attending an event, signing up for a course, or even downloading a language learning app, to conquer any fears or doubts, and to move toward greater commitment (Black, 2025).

Many language educators and others who would like to get involved with language advocacy may think that they do not have skills or the time, or may not know how to get started. The good news is that language advocacy is a broad umbrella with room for many voices. Everyone can be a language advocate – either as an individual or through professional engagement, preferably both. First steps include reflecting on what aspects of language advocacy are most important – a particular language, age group, teaching methodology, research and writing, etc., and on practical considerations of skills, available time, and budget, if any. Another important first step is to reach to professional associations and local organizations in the community to learn about opportunities for involvement. Direct action opportunities include online and social media, development of talking points for prospective students and their parents, educational and local decision-makers, and even political action such as candidacy for school board, faculty senate, etc.

Online and social media have empowered language learners, educators, advocates and stakeholders in terms of access to authentic materials on virtually any topic and to communication and conversation in the target language, as well as to language learning, use, and advocacy. Online and social media empowers language educators, advocates, and other stakeholders to publish at little or no cost relevant information and content available to a broad public through blogs, websites, and social media, with the opportunity for discussion and conversation and to build virtual communities. In addition, access to news and information across languages and cultures is widely available. Beyond information, language learners can learn through many different language websites, apps, and AI-driven resources. Online educational resources (OERs) can empower many learners unable to afford costly language learning platforms to successfully follow a language curriculum

Inclusive approaches to language learning include those which empower non-traditional learners to learn and use additional and heritage languages both within and beyond the classroom. For those non-traditional language learners who may be working or caregiver adults, online courses and offering language classrooms during evening and weekend hours rather than a more traditional weekday schedule can literally open doors to language learning for many who may have not had the opportunity to learn another language in a more traditional context.

For those with learning disabilities or learning differences, the move from an emphasis on grammar and literature to comprehension and communication can enable learners with reading disabilities and differences to achieve better outcomes. The multisensory aspects of contemporary language learning can also empower all learners, including those who may have learning differences and disabilities.

Language educators, advocates, supporters, and stakeholders have an essential role at all the critical points of the decision or choice to study another language – in the initial decision to learn an additional or heritage language, in the choice of language, and – often forgotten in the decision to persist in language learning even when the inevitable pace and plateaus of language learning challenge even the most motivated learners.

While not often mentioned, the role of the Francophile is also important in building interest and skills. The Francophile, a term in use since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, has been described as “markedly friendly to France or French culture” (Merriam-Webster, 2025). The role and importance of the Francophile may be underestimated in French language advocacy, and Francophiles in the educational institution, local community, and beyond can be a positive influence and even role models for the French language learner, adding another dimension to the classroom or learning experience.

The importance of French as a research language is sometimes left unmentioned, but researchers across the disciplines can benefit from the wide range of scholarly and research journals available in French. While French is the obvious choice for research in subject areas related to France, French language, and Francophone culture, it is also a valuable research language for subjects across the disciplines using French as a medium of communication and as a research tool, and French research journals and other resources as research resources in a wide variety of subject areas through databases such as *Gallica*, *Persee*, *Erudit*, and others (BNF, n.d.; CNRS, n.d.). This advantage of French can be especially highlighted in double majors, joint programs, and interdisciplinary collaborations, as well as with gifted learners.

Language educators alone cannot ensure access and affordability of language learning for all – a community partnership including educators, parents, community organizations, business and potential employers, government, and others is

needed, along with direct action (Jaumont, 2017). It is essential for language advocates to always remember the importance of collaborative partnerships both in supporting and promoting language programs and providing opportunities for language use and experiential learning beyond the classroom.

### **3. Conclusions -- Generalizations of Advocacy to Other Languages and Beyond**

While the preceding discussion has been framed by the question of French language advocacy, many of the methods and approaches described can be generalized to support language learning, education in general, as well as causes and questions beyond the classroom. Beyond the classroom, decision-makers in our school districts, on our college and university campuses, and in local, state, and federal government need to be reminded of the importance of languages in our educational institutions, the workplace, and most importantly, in our society and in the globalized world. In working together, with parents and families, in our communities, and in our broader society, we can expand access and opportunity for language learning to all.

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French language advocacy can be described as the defense of French and the ongoing support of all those interested in learning French in the classroom, in the community, and through traditional as well as online and social media. Advocacy needs to be present to support the entire process, from the decision to study French through proficiency, and in our communities, the workplace, and our society. While focused on French language and Francophone culture, the work of French language advocates is framed by the role of French as a global language in a multilingual world.

Advocacy goals include expanding affordability and accessibility of language learning for all learners through advocacy, initiatives, and support by language educators, along with language stakeholders and partners through the entire language learning process – from the initial decision through proficiency. Methods can include blue ocean strategy, change management, and leadership initiatives by advocates and advocacy groups. Issues remain enrollment, affordability, availability, and persistent myths about the practicality of the French language major. Partnerships among educators and stakeholders, along with parents and communities provide a pathway forward.

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Circling back to the importance of French – as a major field of study, as an essential skill across the disciplines, and as a vibrant part of the life of the individual both professionally and personally, it is important to bear in mind the challenges facing the learning and use of French as an additional or heritage language in the US and the need for French language advocacy in the context of a multilingual world.

Beyond awareness, it is equally important to reflect on the role of advocacy throughout the language learning process, from the decision to study a language and choice of which language to study through the entire, lengthy process, replete with challenges to motivation, persistence, and continued study.

The methods, goals, and values that drive French language advocacy can be generalized to apply to advocacy for education and related areas, important to all of us and to our future, as educators and educational institutions continue to face multiple challenges.

French language advocacy exists within the context of language advocacy, driven by a core belief in the value of multilingualism in a multilingual world and an increasingly multilingual society in the US (Montlaur, 2019). The goals and strategies of language advocacy are shared across languages and beyond, with examples including but not limited to the advocacy initiatives of ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) and its regional and state association, the MLA (Modern Language Association), JNCL-NCLIS (Joint National Committee for Languages – National Council for Languages and International Studies), and other organizations. As far as French is concerned, the AATF (American Association of Teachers of French) and its regions and state chapters collaborates on an ongoing basis with the Fédération des Alliances Françaises des USA, and has organized an annual convention jointly with AATG (American Association of Teachers of German) in 2026 (AATF, 2025).

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