

Cultural notes on a few typical French words (not to be translated)

Cf Chapter 9 in ITA (9.4 in particular)

Concours

In France, the cultural significance of competitive examinations with a predetermined quota of successful candidates is considerable. Gruelling “classes préparatoires” after secondary school level are designed to prepare high-flying students for the “grandes écoles” entrance exams, and have tended to promote a competitive and elitist approach to learning in these schools. Other examples of the importance of **concours** are the competitive recruitment procedures for public sector teaching posts (“CAPES” and “agrégation”), civil service appointments in ministries, and even jobs in the Post Office.

Classes préparatoires is the term given to the two years of intensive study required to sit the competitive entrance examinations to the “grandes écoles”. They are extremely demanding post-“baccalauréat” courses, usually taken in a “lycée”. Schools which provide such classes are more highly regarded than those which do not.

Hypokhâgne *first year of two-year preparatory course for the arts section of the École normale supérieure*

khâgne *second year of a two-year preparatory course for the arts section of the École Normale Supérieure*

taupe argot /École/ « classe » : *advanced maths class preparing students for the Grandes Écoles*

Grandes Écoles

The **grandes écoles** are competitive-entrance higher education establishments where engineering, business administration and other subjects are taught to a very high standard. The most prestigious include “l'École Polytechnique” (engineering), the three “Écoles normales supérieures” (humanities and science), “l'ENA” (the civil service college), and “HEC” (business administration).

Pupils prepare for entrance to the **grandes écoles** after their “baccalauréat” in two years of “classes préparatoires” (nicknamed “hypokhâgne” and “khâgne” for humanities and “hypotaupe” and “taupe” for science).

The **CAPES** is a competitive examination for the recruitment of French secondary school teachers. It is taken after the “licence”. Successful candidates become fully-qualified teachers (“professeurs certifiés”)

agrégation: *high-level competitive examination for recruiting teachers in France*

◆ professeur agrégé

[en général] : qualified schoolteacher (who has passed the agrégation)

[en médecine] : professor of medicine (holder of the agrégation)

Can /Université/ : associate professor

◆ **professeur certifié** : qualified schoolteacher (who has passed the CAPES)

◆ **professeur des écoles** : primary school teacher

◆ **professeur principal** : ≈ class teacher ^{Brit}, ≈ form tutor ^{Brit}, ≈ homeroom teacher ^{US}

Collège The term **collège** refers to the type of state secondary school French children attend between the ages of 11 and 15 (ie after “école primaire” and before “lycée”). **Collège** covers the school years referred to as “sixième”, “cinquième”, “quatrième” and “troisième”. At the end of “troisième”, pupils take the examination known as the “brevet des collèges”.

Lycée

Lycées are state secondary schools where pupils study for their “baccalauréat” after leaving the “collège”. The lycée covers the school years known as “seconde” (15-16 year-olds), “première” (16-17 year-olds) and “terminale” (up to leaving age at 18). The term lycée professionnel refers to a lycée which provides vocational training as well as the more traditional core subjects.

Délégués

At the start of the new school year in state “collèges” and “lycées”, pupils elect two class representatives known as “délégués de classe”, as well as two deputies. The role of the délégués is to represent the interest of the class as a whole by liaising with teachers and the school administration. At the end-of-term “conseils

de classe", for example, the *délégués* are consulted during discussions on whether borderline pupils should move up to the next year, leave school or repeat the year. The *délégués* of the whole school elect two "**délégués d'établissement**" who attend the "**conseil d'établissement**", where they participate in discussions on the general running of the school and vote on decisions to be made.

◆ **conseil d'administration**

de société anonyme : board of directors

d'hôpital, école : board of governors

◆ **conseil de classe** /École/ : staff meeting (to discuss the progress of individual members of a class)

◆ **conseil de discipline** (/École/, /Université/) : disciplinary committee

◆ **conseil d'établissement** /École/ : ≈ governing board ^{Brit}, ≈ board of education ^{US}

Académie[cultural note]

France is divided into areas known as **académies** for educational administration purposes. Each **académie** is administered by a government representative, the "recteur d'académie". Allocation of teaching posts is centralized in France, and newly qualified teachers often begin their careers in **académies** other than the one in which they originally lived.

Another significant feature of the **académies** is that their school holidays begin on different dates, partly to avoid congestion on popular holiday routes.

Préfecture, préfet

In France, a **préfet** is a high-ranking civil servant who represents the State at the level of the "département" or the "région". Besides a range of important administrative duties, the role of the **préfet** is to ensure that government decisions are carried out properly at local level. The term **préfecture** refers to the area over which the **préfet** has authority, to the town where the administrative offices of the **préfet** are situated, and to these offices themselves. Official documents such as driving licences are issued by the **préfecture**.

Canton

The **cantons** are electoral areas into which France's "arrondissements" are divided for administration purposes. Each **canton** usually includes several "communes", and corresponds to the constituency of a "conseiller général" who is elected in the "élections cantonales". The main town in the **canton** has a "gendarmerie", a local tax office and sometimes a "tribunal d'instance".

Département

Since 1790, France has been divided into 95 metropolitan **départements** and four overseas **départements**. Each is run by its own local council, the "conseil général", which has its headquarters in the principal town ("le chef-lieu du département"). Every **département** has a code number which appears as the first two figures of postcodes and the last two figures on vehicle registration plates.

Région

The 22 **régions** are the largest administrative divisions in France, each being made up of several "départements". Each **région** is administered by a "conseil régional", whose members ("les conseillers régionaux") are elected for a six-year term in the "élections régionales". The expression "la **région**" is also used by extension to refer to the regional council itself.

Arrondissement

The French metropolitan and overseas "départements" are divided into over 300 smaller administrative areas known as **arrondissements**, which in turn are divided into "cantons" and "communes". There are usually three or four **arrondissements** in a "département". The main town in an **arrondissement** (the "chef-lieu d'arrondissement") is the home of the "sous-préfecture". The "sous-préfet d'arrondissement" reports to the "préfet" and deals with local administration, development and public order.

Marseilles, Lyons and Paris are divided into city districts known as **arrondissements**, each with its own local council (the "conseil d'arrondissement") and mayor. The number of the **arrondissement** appears in addresses at the end of the post code.

DOM-TOM, ROM and COM

There are four “Départements d'outre-mer”: Guadeloupe, Martinique, La Réunion and French Guyana (“Guyane”). They are run in the same way as metropolitan “départements” and their inhabitants are French citizens. In administrative terms they are also “Régions”, and in this regard are also referred to as ROM (“Régions d'outre-mer”).

The term “Dom-Tom” is still commonly used, but the term “Territoires d'outre-mer” has been superseded by that of “Collectivité d'outre-mer” (COM). They are now referred to as **DROM-COM** (départements et régions d'outre-mer et collectivités d'outre-mer)

Overseas departments and regions (départements et régions d'outre-mer **DROM**)

- Guadeloupe (since 1946)
- French Guiana (since 1946)
- Martinique (since 1946)
- Réunion (since 1946)
- Mayotte (since 2011) previously overseas territory. In the 2009 Mahoran status referendum, Mahorans voted to become an overseas department in 2011, which occurred on March 31, 2011.

Overseas collectivities (**collectivités d'outre-mer= COM**)

The category of "overseas collectivity" was created by France's constitutional reform of March 28, 2003. Each overseas collectivity has its own statutory laws.

- French Polynesia (1946–2003: overseas territory, since 2003: overseas collectivity) In 2004 it was given the designation of "overseas country" (French: *pays d'outre-mer*), but the Constitutional Council of France has clarified that this designation did not create a new political category.
- Saint Pierre and Miquelon (1976–85: overseas department, 1985–2003: *sui generis* overseas territory, since 2003: overseas collectivity).
- Wallis and Futuna (1961–2003: overseas territory, since 2003: overseas collectivity). It is still commonly referred to as a *territoire* (*Territoire des îles Wallis et Futuna*).
- Saint Martin and Saint Barthélemy: In 2003, the populations of St. Martin and St. Barthélemy voted in favour of secession from Guadeloupe in order to become separate overseas collectivities of France. On February

7, 2007, the French Parliament passed a bill granting COM status to both jurisdictions. The new status took effect on February 22, 2007. They remain part of the European Union.

Special collectivity

- New Caledonia was classified as an overseas territory beginning in 1946, but as a result of the 1998 Nouméa Accord, it gained a special status (*statut particulier* or *statut original*) in 1999. A New Caledonian citizenship was established, and a gradual transfer of power from the French state to New Caledonia itself was begun, to last from fifteen to twenty year

conseiller, -ère

a « expert » ► **consultant**, ► **adviser** (en : in)

« personne d'expérience » ► **counsellor**, ► **adviser**

■ **conseiller diplomatique/économique/technique**:
diplomatic/economic/technical adviser

■ **conseiller financier** : financial consultant ou adviser

■ **il est conseiller auprès du président** : he is an adviser to the president

■ **que ta conscience soit ta conseillère** : may your conscience be your guide

b /Administration/, /Politique/ « fonctionnaire » ► **council member**, ► **councillor**

mots composés

◆ **conseiller conjugal** : marriage counsellor

◆ **conseiller d'État** : senior member of the Council of State

◆ **conseiller général** : (French) departmental councillor

◆ **conseiller en image** : image consultant

◆ **conseiller matrimonial** : marriage guidance counsellor

◆ **conseiller municipal** : town councillor ^{Brit}, city council man ^{US}

◆ **conseiller d'orientation /École/** : careers adviser ^{Brit}, (school) counselor ^{US}, guidance counselor ^{US}

◆ **conseiller pédagogique** : educational adviser

◆ **conseiller (principal) d'éducation** : year head ^{Brit}, dean ^{US}

◆ **conseiller régional** : regional councillor

◆ **conseiller spécial** : special adviser

Monsieur

a [s'adressant à qn]

■ bonjour Monsieur

[en général] good morning

[nom connu] good morning Mr X

[nom inconnu] good morning | good morning, sir ^{style soutenu}

■ bonjour Messieurs : good morning (gentlemen)

■ (bonjour) Messieurs Dames [☆] : morning all ou everyone [☆]

■ Monsieur, vous avez oublié quelque chose : excuse me | you've forgotten something

■ et pour (vous) Monsieur/Messieurs ? [au restaurant] : and for you, sir/gentlemen?

■ Messieurs [devant un auditoire] : gentlemen

■ Messieurs et chers collègues : gentlemen

■ Monsieur le Président

de gouvernement Mr President

d'entreprise Mr Chairman

■ oui, Monsieur le juge : ≈ yes, Your Honour ou My Lord ou Your Worship

■ Monsieur l'abbé : Father

■ Monsieur le curé : Father

■ Monsieur le ministre : Minister

■ Monsieur le duc : Your Grace

■ Monsieur le comte (ou baron etc) : Your Lordship | my Lord

■ Monsieur devrait prendre son parapluie (style soutenu) : I suggest you take your umbrella, sir ^{style soutenu}

■ Monsieur est servi (style soutenu) : dinner is served, sir ^{style soutenu}

■ Monsieur n'est pas content ? (ironique) : is something not to Your Honour's ^{ironique} ou Your Lordship's ^{ironique} liking?

■ mon bon ou pauvre Monsieur [☆] : my dear sir

→ Voir : Madame

b [parlant de qn]

■ Monsieur X est malade : Mr X is ill

■ Monsieur votre fils [♣] : your dear son

■ Monsieur est sorti (style soutenu) : Mr X ou the Master (of the house) is not at home

■ Monsieur dit que c'est à lui : the gentleman says it's his

■ Monsieur le Président : the President | the Chairman

■ Monsieur le juge X : ≈ (His Honour) Judge X

■ Monsieur le duc de X : (His Grace) the Duke of X

■ Monsieur l'abbé (X) : Father X

■ Monsieur le curé : the parish priest

■ Monsieur le curé X : Father X

■ Monsieur loyal /Cirque/ : ringmaster

c [sur une enveloppe]

■ Monsieur John X : Mr John X | John X Esq

[à un enfant] Master John X

■ Messieurs Dupont : Messrs Dupont and Dupont

■ Messieurs J. et P. Dupont : Messrs J and P Dupont

■ Messieurs Dupont et fils : Messrs Dupont and Son

■ Messieurs X et Y : Messrs X and Y

→ Voir : Madame

d [en-tête de lettre]

■ Monsieur

[en général] Dear Sir

[personne connue] Dear Mr X

■ cher Monsieur : Dear Mr X

■ Monsieur et cher collègue : My dear Sir | Dear Mr X

■ Monsieur le Président

de gouvernement Dear Mr President

d'entreprise Dear Mr Chairman

e /Histoire/ « parent du roi » ► **Monsieur**

f [sans majuscule] ► **gentleman**

« personnage important » ► **great man**

■ ces messieurs désirent ? : what would you like, gentlemen?

■ maintenant il se prend pour un monsieur : he thinks he's quite the gentleman now | he fancies himself as a (proper) gentleman now ^{Brit}

■ les beaux messieurs : the well-to-do ou smart ^{Brit} gentlemen

■ c'est un grand monsieur : he's a great man

■ un méchant monsieur (enfantin) : a nasty man

g

« représentant »

■ Monsieur Tout-le-monde : the man in the street | the average man

■ Monsieur Muscle : Muscleman

« responsable »

■ Monsieur Météo : the weatherman