

FRENCH – General Characteristics
(Adapted from David Alan Stern’s Acting With An Accent: French)

For more in-depth study, see Stern’s CD and booklet

<http://web.ku.edu/~idea/europe/france/france7.mp3> - Listen to this sample from the International Dialects of English Archive web site.

GENERAL FOCUS OF TONE: Velar – the back and bottom of the uvula, and slightly nasal.

Much of the articulation occurs forward, rounded, and with muscular lips.

VOWEL SUBSTITUTIONS:

ɪ becomes i as in: *it, is*

eɪ becomes e (think of this as a shorter, purer sound), as in: *they, came, labor*

ɛ becomes e as in: *lend, especially, men*

u becomes ʊ (very rounded and slightly elongated) as in: *food, ooze, true*

ʊ becomes ɯ (very rounded and slightly elongated) as in: *should, football, woman*

ou becomes o as in: *go, know, grow*

ɔ becomes o as in: *lost, awning, often*

ʌ and ə become ɑ as in: *up, under, supper, above, surround*

æ becomes ɑ as in: *ask, answer, happy*

ɝ and ɜ become ɛr (The “uvular r”) as in: *where, ever, airport*

CONSONANTS:

r becomes ʀ (“voiced uvular fricative r”) as in: *ready, stroke, river*

tʃ becomes ʃ as in: *Charles, children, decision*

dʒ becomes ʒ as in: *June, judge, edge*

θ becomes s as in: *think, thin, thank*

ð becomes z as in: *they, them, other*

z becomes s as in: *these, things, replies*

Initial h sounds are often dropped, as in: *Henry, Higgins, hippopotamus*

OTHER CHARACTERISTICS:

Dominant stress is usually on final syllables, as in: *syllable, whenever, authority*
However, each syllables is stressed, unlike English and American dialects that have more noticeably unstressed syllables.