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# Karfis uses new methods to teach French

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MEDFORD - Tucked away in the comforts of a warm house in West Medford, you can escape to Paris with the help of a welcoming French teacher.

“My hope is that my students gain enough confidence to communicate in French,” said Karfis. “And smile.”

Camille Chevalier Karfis, a native Parisian, arrived in Boston 14 years ago. She was trained as a tri-lingual secretary, being able to speak French, Spanish and English, but did not have the proper permits to work right away so she began tutoring people who were learning French.

“I was not trained as a teacher,” said Karfis. “I was not told what to teach or how to teach. I did try to use different books, but I found that there’s a lack of materials and methods to teach adults French.”

Whereas most French language lessons rely on committing vocabulary and verb tenses to memory by using books and repetition, Karfis does not believe this is the best method to develop French-speaking skills.

“French is a difficult language to learn,” said Karfis. “You have to really learn the sentence structures and then there are all these verb conjugations. It’s easy to open a book with a student and repeat them and work on them. This is mostly how French is taught. But, then you go to Paris and you don’t understand a thing.”

Karfis has developed what she believes is a better method — to teach adults with conversation rather than solely memorization.

“Once the basic structure of the language is learned, you can build with conversation,” said Karfis. “Even though you can’t learn French with just conversation alone, I switch to conversation as soon as possible.”

Karfis formats each class according to her students’ needs. After assessing their goals and the amount of time they have available, Karfis determines the structure of her individual one-on-one lessons. Students can either learn French with Karfis at her home, or by calling her on the phone.

“I don’t believe in group lessons for beginners,” said Karfis. “They need individual attention to find out their strengths and weaknesses and I tailor their lessons to their specific needs.”

For example, if Karfis has a student who is looking to gain some French language skills to an upcoming trip to Paris, she will work with this student to learn more conversational vocabulary and phrases to help the student navigate the markets, restaurants and subway system in France. Whereas, if she has a student who is a business professional moving to France in six months to work, she will work on vocabulary and conversation that is necessary in a work environment.

“Lessons are customized to their needs and goals,” said Karfis. “It’s not so strict and it isn’t rigid, but lessons are structured.”

In trying to create an even more personal learning environment, Karfis has written two fictional books to help her students learn French.

“I had a student who was a Russian scientist who didn’t sleep very much,” said Karfis. “She would often forget everything that I had taught her the day before so instead of repeating every lesson, I began recording a story on tape. I made sure to use the vocabulary and the irregular verbs that I wanted her to use and she loved it so much.”

Karfis found this method so effective that she finished the book and the complementary audio and made it available not only for her students, but also for others who can view and hear the book on her website. The book is called “A Moi Paris — Une Histoire au Présent.”

“It’s a story about an English girl who goes to Paris,” said Karfis. “It puts French in the context of everyday situations.”

Building off her first book, Karfis has also completed a second book that is available for sale on her Web site. This book, “Une Semaine à Paris,” follows Karfis’ theory of making French fun and understandable for the average student. The novel is written in French with the text translated in English so students can easily follow along if they get lost.

But what makes this book unique is that it also includes a travel guide to Paris. Another local Francophile, Sally Peabody, who runs the Web site [www.yourgreatdaysinparis.com](http://www.yourgreatdaysinparis.com), contributed to Karfis’ book by adding travel sections that describe everything from ordering a medium-rare steak in a restaurant to taking a walking tour to see Paris’ great sites.

“If you’ve studied French, you could get through the book very easily,” said Karfis. “But even if you are advanced, you will still find the information interesting.”

To add to Karfis’ increasing selection of free material, she has also added 10 Podcasts that students can download for free from her website. In each 40-minute Podcast, she slowly reads a classic French poem, provides a brief history of the poet and analyses the meaning of the poem.

“The poems I select are the most well recognized,” said Karfis. “These are the same poems that are studied abroad.”

Karfis has more than 5,000 subscribers worldwide who access her free Podcasts. Subscribers are also able to buy the Podcast transcripts through her Web site. Karfis is also regularly featured on the free French Web site, [French.about.com](http://French.about.com).

While her students may have the ambitious goal to one day visit a French-speaking country and speak with the natives, Karfis also has goals for her students.

“My first goal is for them to have fun,” said Karfis. “If you take the time and spend the money, it should be fun. The second thing is to boost my students’ self-confidence. I try to unlock their fears to show them that they won’t be judged. It’s OK to make mistakes. Everyone just wants to communicate.”

– For more information about learning French with Camille Chevalier Karfis, visit her Web site at [www.learnfrenchinboston.com](http://www.learnfrenchinboston.com).

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Damn shes hot!!!

TK Jayaraman

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Mme Karfis is really doing a fine job.I listen to her podcast regularly.She teaches poetry in an interesting manner. Her pronunciation of French is excellent.Looking forward to her regular podcasts..

Atlanta subscriber

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Camille's podcasts and lessons have really been helpful to me. I'm a bit ADD, so rote repetition and grammatical exercises have been a difficult way to build knowledge - but listening to the poetry and Camille's books have been stimulating and she keeps it at a pace I can keep up with. Glad she's getting the recognition!

Melissa

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Camille is an intuitive teacher and is always looking for new ways to make it easy to learn. Congratulations on the coverage!

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