

# VI

## SOUND EFFECTS:

### Gurgle, splash, hiccup!

You don't imagine that the French go "ah-choo" or say "wow," do you? The latter is almost a physical impossibility for them, the letter "w" not really being French (there are very few words starting with "w" in French dictionaries and they are mostly taken from English). To approximate the "wow" sound, it has had to be transcribed as "ouaouh" or, left to its own devices, it would have come out as "vov." Anyway, if you want to understand conversation or liven up your own narrative, you'd do well to learn the following vital sounds.

achoum!

ah-choo

glouglou

gurgle, glug glug

badaboum!

crash!

patatras!

flac!	}	splash!
plouf!		
ouf!		phew!
pouah!		poo! (What a stink!)
miam miam!		yum yum!
toc-toc-toc!		knock-knock-knock!
aïe! ouille!		ow! ouch!
heu, euh	}	um
ben		
boum!		bang!
pan pan!		bang-bang! (gunshot)
clac!		smack!
hi, hi		boo-hoo
youpi!		hurray, goody!
taratata!		rubbish, crap
oh là là là là!		uh oh, oh dear! boy oh boy!
patati patata		blah blah blah; yakety-yak
pinpon		siren of a police car, ambulance or fire engine
hic!		hiccup!
guili guili		(the noise the Frog makes when tickling someone)
bôf!		(a sound to accompany the shrugging of shoulders to show indecision, indifference or ignorance)

There are certain important nouns and adjectives derived from onomatopoeia:

<b>gnangnan</b> (adj.)	wimpish and given to whining (from the whining sound)
<b>olé olé</b> (adj.)	forward in manner and/or speech; used disapprovingly of such conduct in a young woman (“ <b>Elle est plutôt olé olé, ta copine.</b> ” = Your girlfriend comes on pretty strong.)
<b>un scrogneugneu</b>	an old grouch (from the grumbling, grouchy sounds he supposedly emits)
<b>le crincrin</b>	the squeaky, scraping sound of a badly played instrument, particularly a stringed one
<b>le tralala</b>	the frills, the trimmings
<b>faire du tralala</b>	to make a big fuss (when having people over, for example)
<b>les chichis</b>	fuss, ceremony (“ <b>Arrête de faire des chichis.</b> ” = Stop making such a big deal of it.)



chichiteux, chichiteuse

affected, lacking in simplicity

A special mention must go to the onomatopoeic “crac!” Apart from its sound effect (crack!), the French use it to introduce a dramatic event in a narrative. It is a tool used to emphasize and dramatize. Just before relating the climax of the event, pause, then insert a strong “crac!” and continue your description. Study the following examples.

**Ils étaient richissimes et, crac! ils ont tout perdu.**  
(They were loaded and suddenly they lost everything.)

**Ç'avait l'air de bien marcher et puis, crac! on l'a foutu à la porte.** (Everything seemed to be going well and then, suddenly, he was kicked out.)

**Il me parlait de choses et d'autres et, crac! il m'a embrassée.** (He was talking about one thing and another and suddenly he kissed me.)

A few more sentences to test your general ability:

1. Badaboum! Elle tombe! “Aïe, ouille! Hi, hi!” elle se met à pleurer. Un scrogneugneu qui passe lui gueule: “Vous êtes bien gnanngnan, vous!”
  2. Toc-toc-toc! “Qui c'est?” “C'est la concierge. Faut arrêter votre horrible crincrin, y'a les voisins qui rouspètent.”
  3. Miam, miam, des frites!
1. Crash! She falls! “Ow, ouch! Boo-hoo!” she starts crying. An old grouch passing by yells at her, “What a little whiner you are!”
  2. Knock-knock-knock! “Who is it?” “It's the concierge. Stop scratching that awful fiddle, the neighbors are complaining.”
  3. Yummy, French fries!