

M.A. THESIS IN LINGUISTICS

**CROSS LINGUISTIC INTERFERENCE:
A STUDY BASED ON PERFECT AND
IMPERFECT TENSE IN FRENCH AS
LEARNT BY SRI LANKAN STUDENTS.**

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ABSTRACT

Learning a third language is acquiring an alternative set of rules other than the first and the second language. Therefore, there can be interferences on the third language from the first/ second languages during the process of language transfer. A common area where these interferences can be observed is the application of tenses in the past, namely, ' Le Passé Composé (Perfect Tense) and L'imparfait' (The Imperfect Tense) in writing.

French has been offered as a subject in private schools, government schools, private institutions as well as in universities in Sri Lanka, for decades as a foreign language. Almost all the prominent private schools offer 'French' as a subject in Edexcel or Cambridge curriculums which evaluate all four language skills, reading, writing, speaking and listening and thousands of students tend to learn French. The students are expected to use a variety of tenses in writing in order to obtain good grades in writing at the examination. Nonetheless, it is observed that many students fail to do so as a result of getting confused between the tenses in the past in writing.

Teaching the distinction between perfect tense and imperfect tense in French to non-native students can be considered as a one the most difficult challenges that French language teachers face. Many text books contain vague explanations which lead to confusion. The usage of imperfect tense, perfect tense and past tense in English can be drastically different from the usage of the same tenses in French. Therefore, cross linguistic interferences are hardly evitable and more frequent.

In this research, it is expected to examine the interferences in an area in syntax from the first / second languages to French language studies. The motive of this research is to identify the common negative transfers in producing correct, meaningful sentences in past tense in writing. This research is expected to facilitate the identifications of certain errors related to the topic area and therefore will provide a clear stage to diagnose and find solutions to overcome these difficulties.

The suggested field for the research is a Sri Lankan private school where French is offered as a subject for Edexcel examinations. The informants for the research are the 25 students of grade 10, teenagers of 15 years of age. It is conducted by the