

Pronunciation difficulties encountered by Sri Lankan students in learning French as a Foreign Language

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French has been taught as a foreign language in Sri Lanka for more than three decades by gathering a large number of students who have an innate passion to learn and master the language. But diverse problems have been encountered in the pedagogical domain of teaching and learning French in both writing and speaking. Hence, the current research focuses on exploring the pronunciation difficulties encountered by the students of the junior secondary level of the school (Grade 6-8). In order to accumulate the necessary data, a multi-methodology has been used. As a starting point, primary data were accumulated by recordings, class observations and questionnaires whereas secondary data were accumulated by journals, magazines, and previous researches done in the same domain. Out of the sample group of twenty participants, three have acquired Tamil as the L₁ whereas seventeen of them have learnt Sinhala as the L₁. All of them speak and write English as their L₂. Hence most of them have started learning French only as a Foreign Language from the junior secondary level of the school. Consequently they find diverse difficulties in differentiating and in articulating both consonant and vowel sounds in French which exist neither in their L₁ nor in L₂. Therefore, they tend to substitute consonants and vowels in spoken French with the sounds in their L₁ and L₂. Furthermore, omission, silent letters, liaison and enchaînement have also made the pronunciation of French inevitably challenging for them. Moreover the learners in general are not accustomed to speak in French on a regular basis and they do not have a francophone ambiance in the classroom. Hence, this research draws the attention of responsible authorities and academics who facilitate teaching and learning French as a Foreign Language in Sri Lanka to take necessary steps to remedy the aforesaid phenomenon.

Keywords: French as a Foreign Language, L₁ and L₂ interference, Omission, Pronunciation difficulties, Silent letters