

The difficulties encountered by Sri Lankans learning French as a foreign language in a non-francophone context

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French is one of the main foreign languages taught and learnt in Sri Lanka for many decades. It is even included in the secondary and tertiary level education curricular. The major obstacle arises for the French learners from their learning environment, featuring Anglophone based socio cultural background.

The language is a social construction and the culture is an integral part of it. Hence, when one learns a language, one acquires socio-cultural competence parallel to the morpho-syntactic competence. He gains knowledge pertaining to cultural entities (i.e., customs, literature, arts, gastronomy) which cannot be alienated from the learning process.

Being under the English rule for more than a century has changed the traditional Asian social system of Sri Lanka according to the Anglophone values. It is natural that the mentality of the people is too influenced. French is hardly used for daily social interactions of our society. Hence, the Francophone culture is rarely seen or heard in the society.

Nevertheless, in Sri Lanka, French teaching and learning process is more confined to the classroom. The non-francophone setting poses socio-cultural hindrances to both teachers and learners of French. My study will focus attention on this restraining force, which hinders the learning process.

Furthermore, it is expected that the identification and the analysis of cultural obstacles will lead to look for counter measures, which could be implemented to overcome the cultural barriers in the learning process.

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