

SPREAD OF FRENCH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN INDIA

P. Govindarajan and Gajendrakumar

Rise in number of Indians learning foreign languages post-Independence, thanks to globalization. Among various foreign languages, French language has gained momentum in India. French has emerged as a global language. Learning and teaching of French as a foreign language has deep-rooted in every corner of India, especially in the post-colonial society of India. Research aims at studying the spread of French as a Foreign Language in the educational institutions in India and the driving forces behind it.

Keywords: French-History-career growth-French culture- Schools in India-Universities in India-Teaching French.

INTRODUCTION

Speaking one language in the competitive world of twenty first century is not sufficient. Multi-lingual proficiency has increased the opportunities in Indian and abroad.

While any language serves as an asset in finding jobs. French, however, is one of the most used languages across the world. It is the second most taught language in the world. French is spoken by approx. 220 million people across the five continents. French is used as a working language in many multinational companies in various sectors. Entrepreneurs, researchers and foreign students are often attracted to France as it is the fifth biggest economy in the world.

A well versed student in French is more liable to find admissions in veteran varsities of Europe which is often on very favourable financial terms. They are also eligible for applying for a French Government grant to enrol for higher studies in France. Several exchange programs offered in France could be enriching experiences. French being a working and official language of the United Nations, opens up a wide range of opportunities in the field of foreign relations.

French serves as a gateway of opportunities to Indian students and a career asset. Due to the growing demand, inclusion of French as a foreign language into the curriculum of school and college education has become inevitable in India.

HISTORY

French descended from the spoken Latin language of Roman Empire and is a part of Indo-European language. It slowly spread across the world gradually and is now a global language. The French culture was introduced in India with the invasion of the Europeans who afterwards established colonies here in India.

The French India, previously known as the *Établissements français dans l'Inde* ("French establishments in India"), was a French colony made up of small colonies which were geographically separate on the Indian subcontinent. The possessions were originally won over by the French East India Company in the second half of the 17th century, and were in effect included in the Union of India in 1950 and 1954.

The French East India Company was planned by Jean-Baptiste Colbert and one of the major cities or ports used by the French for trade in India was the city of Pondicherry or now known as Puducherry.

The city of Pondicherry is located near Tamil Nadu and is still one of the few places remaining in India today that still has a French speaking population. If one visits Pondicherry today, he/she will find that there are quite a few people from French origin that still live there. French is still one of the official languages of Pondicherry and one can choose to converse in French.

The magnificent statues of Joseph François Dupleix and Joan of Arc, the warrior saint of France, show the significant French weightage on the history of the place. An attraction for the French language and French culture is not at all rare. Many French tourists visit Pondicherry out of curiosity because they feel familiar to their own country to a certain extent.

France being considered the literary hub of the world spread the real meaning of its literature in its colonies in the Indian sub-continent. There are several stories and poetries that have been written by the French during their rule in India. Toru Dutt was one of such poets who wrote in French. It is evident to say that there is a little France that is still alive in India today.

French in career

Learning any French as a foreign language in itself has many advantages. From emigration to work to future studies and even travelling, learning a French as a foreign language gives you an upper hand. You get exposed to a whole new culture. There are many such languages worth learning but French tops all of them. Learning French makes a huge impact on one's future career prospects. Major French countries are developing at a very fast pace. In almost all sectors, career opportunities have aroused for immigrants in French countries. French is the second most influential language in the world. It is the official language in 41 countries in the world which makes it second in line in terms of importance after English. Even on the internet, French comes second after English.

France is one of the world's major foreign tourist places. It welcomes 75 million tourists every year. This signifies the prospects in the tourism and hospitality industry of France. Hotel management and culinary students of India have great opportunities if they are skilled in French language.

France is Europe's foremost investor in foreign countries. This marks the value of French International business. Skilled MBA students of India can secure their

future working in such international agencies if they are well versed in speaking French language.

The French culture is considered very creative. It has its root in art, dance, cuisine and fashion. Indian artists can expose themselves to the world via the French culture. Chefs in India don't get much attention and value. They can get what they deserve in a culture where cuisine has an immense value. Coming to fashion, French fashion is world famous. Chanel, Louis Vuitton, Lacroix are just some of the names of many. All these brands provide a huge stage for Indian fashion designers.

The quality of technology in France is considered one of the best in the world. France is a leader in aerospace engineering and physics. Highly skilled engineers of India find jobs in such sectors very easily if they are exposed to French at an early stage during their bachelor studies.

Even the French film industry and literature community are always in the talks. Our Indian directors, producers, writers can get a good stage for their projects. All they need to do is learn French.

Learning French opens up a whole lot of doors for a better career in one's future in any field he/she wants to work in. French countries are well developed in almost all fields with immense number of career opportunities.

STATISTICS

Following are the figures pertaining to the impartment of French in India. French is the most widely taught Second language in CBSE schools from classes 8, 7 or even 6. Schools that offer French in their curriculum per state are as follows:

- Andaman & Nicobar – 111
- Andhra Pradesh – 414
- Arunachal Pradesh – 287
- Assam – 220
- Bihar – 662
- Chandigarh – 157
- Chhattisgarh – 510
- Dadar & Nagar Haveli – 7
- Daman & Diu – 5
- Delhi – 1983
- Goa – 14
- Gujarat – 316
- Haryana – 1224
- Himachal Pradesh – 221
- Jammu & Kashmir – 121
- Jharkhand – 363

- Karnataka – 629
- Kerala – 1249
- Lakshadweep – 12
- Madhya Pradesh – 921
- Maharashtra – 605
- Manipur – 64
- Meghalaya – 23
- Mizoram – 13
- Nagaland – 32
- Orissa – 287
- Pondicherry – 17
- Punjab – 1001
- Rajasthan – 767
- Sikkim – 211
- Tamil Nadu – 580
- Tripura – 43
- Uttar Pradesh – 2065
- Uttaranchal – 470
- West Bengal – 241

At college level, students may learn French language courses as beginners where prior knowledge is not mandatory. Almost all major Indian Universities and Colleges offer full-time and part-time mode Under-Graduate, Post-Graduate and Ph.D. programmes with specialization in French. Affiliated colleges offer French as a Foreign language under Foundation Course in Humanities and Social Sciences. There are about 40 well known Language Learning Institutes spread across six major metro cities in India that offer Certificate courses in French. The network of the Alliance Françaises in India offer Elementary, Intermediate and higher level French language courses for different age groups and for professionals.

Aforementioned figures show that Indian government supports the multi-lingual learning through Educational institutions. French is being taught all over the country and lakhs of students are vouching for it. The following is the list of Central, State and Deemed Universities offering French language courses.

Jawaharlal Nehru University – Delhi

Banaras Hindu University – Varanasi

Jamia Millia Islamia - Delhi

English Foreign Language University – Hyderabad

University of Mumbai
University of Delhi
Kurukshetra University
Maharishi Dayanand University
Aligarh Muslim University
Punjab University
Banasthali Vidyapeeth – Rajasthan
School of Foreign Languages (IGNOU)
University of Madras
VIT University
SRM University
Pune University
Sastra University
and IITs.

ACADEMIC BENEFITS

It is learnt that students who have opted French as their second language in school or in college achieve higher scores in their exams than who have not. This is one of the main reasons why many Indian students prefer learning French in schools. Students learning French as a second language outperformed those who were not learning French as a second language. Academic pressure is reduced to half by learning French when compared to other languages.

SURVEY

A pilot study was conducted amongst students of age groups 18-22 to understand their point of view towards French being a part of their curriculum. We asked them various questions regarding their opinion and the impartment of French in educational institutions.

Based on the responses received, we can draw up the following conclusions based on the opinion of the people:

- Most of the people agreed on the requirement of a foreign language as the second language.
- A majority of the candidates supported French as one of the major emerging languages of the world
- France is a hi-tech country, with various mathematic, scientific and historic achievements. Today many people want to study in France or even work there.

- To acquire such opportunities, one must be well-versed in the French language.
- Through this, not only does one have grasp on a foreign language, but also ,one can now explore a whole new world of opportunities and experience
- One can learn French simply to teach it to others
- Learning a new foreign language plays an important role in cross cultural communication
- We can implement this through various language programmes, courses etc.

CONCLUSION

Learning French as a Foreign language opens up a whole lot of doors for a better career in one's future in any field that he/she wants to work in. The Indian youth gains a lot of advantage by learning French in their early education stage which helps them to be hired in Multi-national companies as interpreters or translators. Companies recruit the employees with proficiency in French. French speaking Indians are in high demand to be observed in a company and posted in other branches located in French speaking countries, this technique reduces the burden of training their employees in French after recruitment. French learned Indians are employed overseas to teach French in schools, colleges and Universities.

Therefore, Learning French not only improves academic skills and marks but also prepares Indian students for their careers who will suit the best as an enlightened citizenship catering to the needs of today's world.

References

- Chugani, H. (1993). "Reshaping Brain for Better Future." As quoted in *Chicago Tribune*, April 15. Cohen, P. (1995). "Understanding the Brain." *Education Update*. ASCD. Cooper, T. (1987).
- Gingsburg, H. and McCoy, I. (1981). "An Empirical Rationale for Foreign Language in Elementary Schools." *Modern Language Journal* 65, pp. 36-42.
- Krashen S. and M. Long *et al.* (1982). *Child-Adult Differences in Second Language Acquisition*. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House.
- Benson, C. (2002). Real and potential benefits of bilingual programmes in developing countries. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 5 (6), 303-317.

APPENDIX

RESPONSES OF THE SURVEY CONDUCTED:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Do you think french educational institutions should be taught in?</i>	<i>Why do you think learning French is helpful?</i>	<i>Do you think Frenchis important with relation with to career opportunities?</i>	<i>How does it help you in knowing French culture and education?</i>
Harshil	Yes	It helps very efficiently as it removes one of the main barrier between two different cultures i.e. Language barrier. Hence it'll help me in blending in with masses if I wish to work in France.	Yes	It helps us to know more and more about its culture as we can easily communicate with locals for knowing more and more about the French culture
Razeena	Yes	It helps you to know the local slangs and colloquial terms used in that country. It makes me open to more career oppurtunities.	If you are ever going to work in France then it will definitely give you an edge over the other foreign candidates.	When you learn a language you come across many proverbs and idioms used in that language and usually such sayings have a lot of history behind it. So in a way one can get an idea of the country's culture.
Sreevidhya	Yes	French is spoken all over the world. Hence it'll help me.	Yes	Depends on the individual. If the person is interested in knowing about the french culture and traditions then it is beneficial.
Jhanvi Saraswat	Yes	When we learn new language we can understand their customs religions n this helps to know about their culture and traditions	Yes	If we are able to understand a language it will help to know about their culture and education also
Rishabh	Yes	French is a global language. Learning it'll help anyway.	Yes	Helps to blend in with french tradition and its people

contd.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Do you think french should be taught in educational institutions?</i>	<i>Why do you think learning French is helpful?</i>	<i>Do you think Frenchis important with relation with to career opportunities?</i>	<i>How does it help you in knowing French culture and education?</i>
Mahima Bhargava	Yes	The local talk is know	Definitely	In case I wish to travel to France or even study there or become a French teacher myself
Tanya Srivastava	Yes. Studies have shown that knowing multiple languages is helpful in the overall development of the brain	You can be involved in the day to day activities of those people as u will be treated as one of their own. On the other hand one who doesnt know the language is considered a foreigner.	Yes it is as french is one of the most popular languages spoken in the world after english and Spanish	I personally don't think that one can know the culture and traditions of other countries by just learning their languages but if u ever visit these countries u will be considered one of their own and that will help u make strong bonds with the people and hence you will learn a lot about their culture
Shubhi Sinha	Yes, it helps to in knowing culture and traditions of various countries	You can read their cultural books. Interact their people.	Yes	You can read their cultural books. Interact their people.
Aayush Jain	Yes	Experntence.	Yes	Experiencelt helps in many ways. A language is the key to its tradition. A language is carved out of the culture.
Neeraj	Yes, it will be the strength to compete in job and business	Yes, it helps	Not much, would prefer German, Japanese, Chinese	Knowing the language helps in knowing the thinking process of the people and thus helps in understanding their culture and tradition.

contd.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Do you think french should be taught in educational institutions?</i>	<i>Why do you think learning French is helpful?</i>	<i>Do you think Frenchis important with relation with to career opportunities?</i>	<i>How does it help you in knowing French culture and education?</i>
Sarthak Ahuja	Yes	Helps in divarication and mixing easily with others	Yes	In better opportunities in life ahead
Saurabh Dubey	Yes	By learning their languages we came across certain words which depicts thier culture and traditions	Yes	Learning to read and write would help in knowing french culture because then we will be capable of reading thier books written in french language
Sonal Aggrawal	Yes	good	yes	it helps a lot
Snigdha Gupta	Yes	It helps to blend in their culture	Yes it will help in jobs and in setting up business ventures	It helps to grab better opportunities in life
Manjari				
Kulshreshtha	Yes	Helps you to know people	Yes	It helps a lot
Anjali Rawat	Yes very much	Its one of the best way to know about the people of the country and their attitude towards life	Yes	It tells about the ancient past if the country
Utkarsh	Yes very much	Its one of the best way to know about the people of the country and their attitude towards life	Yes	It tells about the ancient past if the country
Harshil Soni	Yes	Culture and traditions aside, multilingual teaching usually helps for the future career	Yes	It is good to learn a new language and culture. It would help if one has plans for going abroad after bachelors
Aditi	Yes	We read literature of that language and get an idea about their culture	Yes it is a socially accepted language	We come to know about the various laws and practices of that culture gradually.
Jasneet	Yes	language automatically helps in knowing it	yes	the language itself describe the culture

contd.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Do you think french should be taught in educational institutions?</i>	<i>Why do you think learning French is helpful?</i>	<i>Do you think Frenchis important with relation with to career opportunities?</i>	<i>How does it help you in knowing French culture and education?</i>
Vastavikta	Yes	Makes it easier to understand and gives deeper knowledge	Yes	By being able to speak french, I can be a part of the culture and education
Avnish Verma	No. Multilingual should be in terms of computer languages not spoken languages.	Living in a multilingual region enhance the sense of cultural traditions as different people have different customs.	Spanish	Language helps in knowing french culture as you can explore the culture only if you know the language of that culture.
Ananya	Yes it is important.	It helps in connecting with their ideologies and therefore giving us a sight of their cultures.	Yes	It helps in understanding French pedagogy to by the platform of language and ideas.
Alok	No	I think we all should solely be devoted to his own culture	Maybe	You'll know the culture only once you are a part of that culture
Prathyusha	Yes. I think it is important	If you know other languages apart from your local languages then it will be easier to interact with people of other countries thus makes us aware of their culture and tradition.	Yes	Interacting with people in their mother language will make them comfortable and and thus we can know about their culture.
Shalini	Yes	If we know language of particular country, we know about it more easily	Yes	tourism and job opportunities makes french beneficial
Prachi	Yes	Whenever you learn a language, you 'll always get through its background	Yes because it is now known in many parts of the world	Same as and question
Nikhil Gupta	Yes	knowing a language helps to understand countries culture and traditions	yes because french is being spoke in many countries	If we understand french we will be able to understand french culture and education easily

contd.

Name	Do you think french should be taught in educational institutions?	Why do you think learning French is helpful?	Do you think Frenchis important with relation with to career opportunities?	How does it help you in knowing French culture and education?
Seebani Mahapatra	Yes!!	multilingual teaching makes people understand the sanctity of the culture, it teaches you the history and even brings people close from different culture	Yes! It is widely spread language....so more people can connect to it.	Teaching of French language freshens the history of France....and even brings the cultural background in the limelight making us mouldable in different cultural background enriching us with knowledge.... Not learnt French yet
Diksha Singh	Yes	Communication with native people of that region is the best way to get knowledge about that region as they have experiences	Yes it is	
Anirudh Jindal	Yes	The pedagogy should be such that it demonstrates the values and tradition of its respective countries.	Yes	It tells us how to deal with people with whom you and doing business. Either they are low context or high context people. How much importance do they give on values and culture.
Suyash Shukla	Yes I think multilingual teaching is important has it is very beneficiary for the communication purposes. If you know multiple languages you broaden your base of literature which helps in	Yes it is very helpful in knowing culture and tradition of various countries as multilingual makes you read different languages and literatures and you come to know about people of different countries and their traditions	Yes i think french relation to multilingual teaching is beneficial as french is widely spoken in the world so it is very beneficial for communication	It helps in knowing french culture we come to know that french people are well mannered and are organised as their language suggest to us

contd>

<i>Name</i>	<i>Do you think french should be taught in educational institutions?</i>	<i>Why do you think learning French is helpful?</i>	<i>Do you think French is important with relation with to career opportunities?</i>	<i>How does it help you in knowing French culture and education?</i>
	expanding knowledge. It is also beneficiary for students as they open gates to various colleges of different countries			
Sonalee Sreshta	Yes	By introduction of the colloquial mannerism of a place	Yes	If i want to pursue education in France
Ashish	Yes	Helps to understand their culture better	Yes	We can interact with them and they are comfortable to tell about themselves
Shalki Srivastava	Yes	Helps in interaction.	Yes	Language speaks volume about the culture
Nikita	Yes	By knowing the language we are always keen to know about the people.	yes	When we learn about the language, the culture and education imbibed in that language comes automatically!
Pranvi	Yes	Helps to know and interact with people	Yes	It helps to peruse education and job opportunities in france and other European countries
Kartik	Yes	Understanding and valuing cultural diversity are the keys to countering racism in nation. All individuals must feel free to explore the uniqueness of their culture and identity if they communicate in same native language	yes	if i get job there than it is very easy to communicate with local public..i can easily mix with them
Sakshi	yes	it truly helps because language will help you to get closer	yes	it will make my way easy to contact the natives
Dhruv	No	It may manipulate our culture and thinking	no	same as before