

# Analysis on the Problems and Teaching Strategies of Teaching French as a Second Language

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**Abstract:** French, often considered to be the most romantic language in the world can always tickle people's fancy. While Sino-French Cultural Year, Sino-French Forum and other cultural exchanges between China and France become more and more popular, French also comes to be known. At the same time, the demand for French-speaking talents has increased, the number of French-speaking majors in universities and students taking French as a second foreign language are also increasing. Currently, students are not motivated to learn French as a second language and they will flinch from a difficulty. In addition, their comprehensive ability to use French is not ideal. What's more, because the teaching time is limited, it is difficult to balance fundamental teaching and cultural cultivation. In this regard, this paper is going to actively explore a variety of teaching methods to strengthen students' listening and speaking ability, extend the classroom in multiple directions so as to maintain students' enthusiasm for learning and improve their ability as well as enhance the cultural connotation of the curriculum to finally achieve a better teaching result.

**Keywords:** French as a second language; Problems; Teaching strategies; Improvement methods

## 1. Introduction

Under the background of the "The Belt and Road Initiative", multilingual acquisition has become the trend of the times. In recent years, exchanges between China and France have become more frequent. The Sino-French Cultural Year and the Sino-French Cultural Forum have organized a series of Sino-French cultural exchange activities, which have promoted the deepening of friendly relations between the two countries and also enabled French and French culture. At the same time, the demand for French-speaking talents continues to increase, and soaring colleges start to provide French as a Second Language curriculum. In college French teaching, there are students taking it as a major and English major students taking it as a second language learning. As the second foreign language of English majors, students spend less time and energy than English. Therefore, in the process of teaching French as a foreign language, various problems will emerge. For example, students rely on interest alone to choose and their motivation for learning is insufficient, and they are also retreating when they encounter difficulties; the students' comprehensive ability to use is weak, especially poor in listening and speaking ability; the class time is limited, and it is difficult to balance the fundamental teaching and cultural teaching. In response to such situations, this paper is going to actively explore a variety of teaching methods, strengthen students' listening and speaking ability training, and extend the class-

room in multiple directions to maintain students' enthusiasm for learning, improve students' comprehensive ability to use, and enhance the cultural connotation of the curriculum to achieve better teaching effect.

## 2. Problems in Teaching French as a Second Language

### 2.1. Students lack motivation and flinch from difficulty

French is often considered to be the most romantic language in the world and more and more people are becoming familiar with French as well as French culture because of the frequent cultural exchanges between our two countries, which is also fully reflected in students' elective course as a second language. Taking School of International Studies, Jingdezhen Ceramic Institute's English major students as an example, lots of people will choose French as a second language and sometimes the ration will reach 3/4. Many students have great interest and expectation in French. This phenomenon is particularly prominent in the first semester of teaching when the classroom atmosphere is good and students have passion as well as enthusiasm and the interaction is effective. However, with the deepening of teaching, grammar knowledge has increased, and some students have begun to fear the negative and positive nouns in French, complicated verb and changes in various tenses. Then, the classroom atmosphere is gradually dull, the student par-

ticipation is not as good as before. And in the last semester, non-graduate students or students who do not need to use French for postgraduate study are in a period of burnout, which is in stark contrast with the students who have been studying French with a serious attitude.

## 2.2. Students have poor comprehensive ability

The Syllabus stipulates that the goal of teaching French as a second foreign language of college is "to develop students with certain reading ability and basic ability to listen, write, speak and translate, so that students can use French as a tool to obtain the information needed by the profession, and to lay a good foundation for further improvement of the French language." The training mode of French major can not be copied in the second foreign teaching, because the purpose of professional training is to create a solid, comprehensive and high-level French talent, while the second foreign language learning especially English majors students value the role of the French as a tool that will be helpful in graduate entrance exam. Therefore, they just want to have high scores and their standard is whether they have mastered the grammar vocabulary and solve the questions or not even though some of them are really pursuing to master this language. However, they don't get trained enough in terms of listening and they do not have a French-speaking environment (non-French speaking teachers) due to limited study time as well as single training mode. Therefore, it is really difficult for those students to hold a smooth conversation with foreigners. Also, a major bottleneck of teaching French as a second language is that students often have poor listening and speaking ability as well as a poor comprehensive ability.

## 2.3. Class hour is limited and It is difficult to balance fundamental teaching and cultural teaching

Taking the author's school as an example, currently, there are only three semesters that providing second language learning, including the second semester of sophomore year and the whole year of junior year and there are four class every week (total class hour is 192). According to the upcoming revision of the teaching plan, the class hours will be greatly reduced, and the total class time will be reduced to 160. In such a limited class time, it is really difficult for those English major students taking French as a second language with zero foundation to reach a certain level of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating from the perspective of teaching and student acceptance. Therefore, cramming teaching is common and teachers usually cover a large amount of knowledge so as to prepare students for exams, which also adds pressure on teachers. In this cause, it is only possible to finish fundamental teaching and really difficult to carry out cultural teaching and expand the cultural connotation of this curriculum.

## 3. Teaching Strategies and Improvement Methods for Teaching English as a Second Language

### 3.1. Enrich teaching methods and maintain students' enthusiasm for learning

It is very important to maintain the enthusiasm of students to learn and to cultivate their interest in the entire teaching process. What's more, students have to adjust their mentality and learning methods while it is also pivotal for teachers to guide teachers and adopt vivid teaching methods.

In addition, we should combine traditional teaching and modern teaching. In the past, the teaching mode was single when teachers deliver speech and students passively accept. Also, there was not a lot of time left for students to think and they would flinch from difficulty. Therefore, teachers should appropriately increase some interactive activities, including questioning and let students think so as to keep in the same pace. Meanwhile, multimedia teaching equipment and rich online resources should be fully utilized along with Powerpoint to make the teaching vivid and motive students' enthusiasm.

Furthermore, teachers can also maintain students' enthusiasm for learning by moderately contrasting English and French and giving a lively class. Both English and French belong to the Indo-European language family and they have similarities in voice and grammar. In the speaking learning process, students can refer to their English pronunciation. Also, tongue twister can be used for this purpose. For example, "Un chasseur sachant chasser sait chaser sans son chien de chasse" allows students to easily distinguish between [s] and [ʃ] sounds and simple French songs can also make the classroom atmosphere lively. A relaxed classroom can help students to take the initiative and effectively learn the speaking part. In the process of learning grammar, English grammar can also be adopted to explain so as to make it easier for students to accept. For example, in English, adjectives always end with "ly" while negative French adjectives always end with "ment". Moreover, the personal pronoun usage in French is similar to English. However, this kind of comparison should be used reasonably because too much emphasis on English grammar will lead to confusion. In this way, students can overcome the fear of facing rigorous and meticulous French grammar and maintain the enthusiasm of learning.

### 3.2. Strengthen listening and speaking ability improve students' comprehensive ability

As a branch of foreign language teaching, second language teaching has the same purpose, which is to cultivate students' ability to communicate in a foreign language. In addition to teaching students basic language knowledge such as pronunciation, grammar and vocabu-

lary, French teaching should also focus on the cultivation of students' listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Under the traditional teaching mode, students' theoretical knowledge is well mastered, but the listening and speaking ability is relatively weak. Under the new situation of increasingly frequent international exchanges, the second foreign language teaching should pay more attention to cultivating students' language expression ability.

In the stage of speaking learning, teachers can choose French classic songs and classic poetry to let students practice, which is not only beneficial for them to accurately pronounce but also better grasp the pronunciation of continuous reading, joint, rhythm etc. With the deepening of teaching, teachers can organize students to conduct daily situational dialogues in the classroom, or set different themes, and students can write their own dialogues and drill them. At the same time, French classic movie clips can be selected for students to imitate dubbing. Through a series of uninterrupted daily listening and speaking exercises, students' listening and speaking skills will inevitably be cultivated, and students' comprehensive ability to use French will also be greatly improved.

### **3.3. Expand the classroom in multiple directions and improve the cultural connotation of curriculum**

Language and culture are closely related to each other. In French teaching, in order to guide students to correctly understand the language, teachers should not only emphasize basic language learning such as pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar, but also pay attention to students' cultural teaching and cultivate students' comprehensive quality. However, due to the limited time, it is difficult to have both fundamental teaching and cultural teaching.

Regarding the class hours, only personal advice is made here while school arrangements should be obeyed. From the author's standing point, the amount of class time should be added or at least it should not be reduced. If

objective conditions are not allowed, teachers should actively seek other ways to extend the classroom in multiple directions and increase the French language learning path. For example, apply for a public elective course, use different cultures as the teaching content for each topic, or apply for the second class, and carry out cultural activities such as French film dubbing, poetry reading, song competition, and so on. In this way, it can not only ensure students' learning time outside the first classroom, but also enable students to learn the practical knowledge in the classroom, improve the students' ability to use French, and enhance the cultural connotation of the French curriculum.

In general, the importance of second foreign language teaching in the curriculum is not obvious, but it plays an important role in cultivating multilingual talents that adapt to the development of the "The Belt and Road Initiative" trend and improving the foreign language use ability of multilingual talents. Therefore, we should pay attention to the problems that arise in the teaching of the second foreign language, and actively seek ways to improve. By continuously optimizing the teaching strategies and improving the teaching effect, we will contribute to the cultivation of multilingual talents.

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