
IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THE MÉLANGE OF CULTURES IN THE CONTEXT OF A GLOBAL VILLAGE

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Abstract: In the current era of globalization, where one can experience the world in just a click, learning foreign languages has become essential. Language barriers can result in alienation among people; therefore, it is vital for us to be able to converse in more than one language. Learning foreign languages enhances one's ability to adapt to multiculturalism and also helps to grab the plethora of opportunities available around us in the field of education, profession, travel, etc. Gone are the days where one language was adequate in order to sustain in the world. On the contrary, today, learning foreign languages is more of a need than a choice. The more languages one knows, the more one connects to the diverse cultures and people from across the globe. Learning a foreign language is a challenge, as it is not acquired like the first language. There are numerous ways to learn languages and thanks to globalization, which makes learning languages simpler, yet complicated owing to the abundance of information and resources available. This paper carries out an exploration of globalization, cultural diversity, dire need to learn a foreign language and the challenges associated with language learning. French being the official language for more than 25 countries, with estimated 60 million individuals using it in their daily conversation, is one of the most widely spoken languages around the world. The author of this paper would like to highlight the challenges in learning French and other foreign languages in countries where these languages are not spoken. Furthermore, the author of this paper would like to emphasize the role of foreign languages in the current era of multiculturalism in the world around and its importance.

Keywords: Barriers, Cultural Diversity, Challenges, French, Globalization, Language-Learning, Multiculturalism, Resources, Stereotype.

Introduction: Globalisation is a phenomenon where the people and information are accessible and inter connected erasing the boundaries. The role of language has taken a new paradigm shift, gaining predominance in various sectors like education, profession, travel etc. Networking becomes easier and efficient only when language barriers are addressed. Therefore, the demand for learning different foreign languages has escalated tremendously catering to the competitors in the field.

Language learning will not only help in fetching the opportunities in the place of work or education but also enhances one's interpersonal skills which further helps them to be more open minded to different perspectives, cultures and people.

Charlemagne, former king of Franks, rightly said, "To have another language is to possess second soul" Charlemagne, an emperor between 742 and 815 AD, asserted the importance of a language even in those days.

With the languages, one becomes conscious of one's own language and limitations and enjoys the varied and possibilities and differences in other languages.

Culture plays a key role in the process of learning a language as it gives a panoramic outlook towards the life in general. Furthermore, it augments the ability to accept, absorb, respect, diversity without being judgemental. The new perspectives are sure to help the individual to stretch his/her boundaries and explore newer horizons and savoir-faire. The culture is a mix of the habits one has been following and carried out by the next generations.

Objectives:

- To enable learners, understand the challenges of learning languages
- To create awareness about the importance of learning a foreign language
- To make the learners aware of the cultural shocks.

Discussion:

The Challenges while Learning A Foreign Language: Despite the increase in language learning resources, there are still many challenges teachers face to inspire people to learn foreign languages. As teachers of foreign languages, it is essential that we come up with fascinating ideas to make language learning a delightful experience and a process.

If the teaching tools and techniques become intelligible, the language learning process becomes effortless. Keeping in mind the varied competency levels of the learners in a particular class room, the teacher may strategise and design the session plans accordingly.

It is widely assumed that the spread of English learning will enhance the quality of the whole nation in China. Chinese government promulgates a series of policies to strengthen the significance of English learning. For example, no matter what subject a student majors in, he must pass the national standard English examination in order to obtain the professional title in the career. Any PhD thesis must be composed basing on the original English materials (Zhang, 2003: p138). It is true that more people know more English words or grammars through the preparation for taking exams. However, is it true if one cannot pass English exam, he is not a qualified talent. Is it true that only those who have good mastery of English can be regarded as talents. No matter what academic achievement one may have conquered, if he cannot pass English exam, he is not valuable to be a scholar. Has English ability become the exclusive standard for the judgment of talents in China? Another question people may ask is who they are.

The above passage highlights the impact of a foreign language in a non English speaking world. The governments are also encouraging and using strategies mentioned in the passage to inculcate the habit of learning languages. These kind of strategies could help learners opt English but making it a compulsory can have a negative impact as it is forced/imposed on them by the State, thereby forcing the learners to learn only for the academic purpose, but not willingly to explore the language.

Learner Centric Approach: Teaching and Learning process has been changing since 20th century. It has turned from teacher centric to learner centric and knowledge is gained not only within the four walls of the classroom but acquired beyond the realms of the classroom. Perhaps, the intention behind language learning should be to use it in real life situations.

Through this way, the actual purpose is met when the learner is able to reproduce what is learnt.

Cognitive or Thinking Skills: Because of which, most of the learners coming from corporate colleges tend to perform well in the written skills while they lack the speaking and cognitive skills. However, it is also noticed that the learners are unable to write on their own because of extensive rote learning method adopted by the teachers and learner. Eventually, most of the learners coming from corporate colleges tend to perform well in the written skills while they lack the speaking and cognitive skills. However, it is also noticed that the learners are unable to write on their own because of extensive rote learning method adopted by the teachers and learner.

Cultural Shock: Language learning is not only about learning how to communicate but also to learn their culture which can include their way of living, food habits, clothing etc. In the process of introducing to a foreign culture, there could be a possibility for a cultural shock which could in turn create disinterest towards the language. As language teachers, it becomes a challenging task for the teachers to find ways and means to create eagerness within the classrooms amidst the limitations. Most importantly, the learners must not start believing the stereotypes learnt through prejudices and blocks. Therefore, it is important that they are corrected or enlightened through exposure to avoid the risk of judgemental opinions and beliefs. It may also lead the learner to misunderstand resulting in wrong impressions. It is necessary, as language teachers to focus more on acclimatisation than on the communication.

Conclusion: The author of this paper has attempted to enable learners comprehend the difficulties in learning a foreign language and also the cultural shocks and stereotypes which can actually help them if accepted as they are, than being judgemental about them. If a learner is introduced to many cultures, he/she may be more tolerant and good at understanding people. It also helps in transforming oneself both professionally and personally.

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