



## TEACHING FRENCH FOR HOTEL MANAGEMENT STUDENTS IN AN INDIAN CONTEXT.

**Santhana  
Krishnan K G**

Center for Global Languages PK Block , Palace Road Bangalore University  
Bangalore- 560009

**ABSTRACT** Thanks to globalisation , the world needs to work together as a global team and in such a situation , the need to learn foreign languages to succeed , is immense .  
The French teacher finds himself in a constantly evolving situation and he must cater to the demands in the student's job market .  
He needs to realise that changes are imperative in teaching , to meet the expectations of the students and specifically , hotel management students learning French , must be capable of using it in their profession as it is absolutely necessary .  
For a hotel management student , the aim of learning French is the practical aspect and the efficiency of the language to facilitate his professional work in the hospitality industry .  
Hence the teaching of French must target the expectations and the professional needs of the students.

**KEYWORDS :** Globalisation , Hotel Management , French for professional use

This quote by Phil Collins explains the process of learning that a teacher has to constantly strive , to ensure that the student comprehends and learns easily without any hassle.

Teaching , as we all know , begins at home and the first teacher for any child is the mother and later the parents continue this never ending task of education through the early years of a child's growth.

The teacher steps in later and the process of teaching – learning continues unabated with the pupil trying to gain the wisdom communicated by the teacher.

When teaching began in a society , it was centred around the teacher disseminating his wisdom orally , acquired over the years , through his experience of life. Great teachers like Aristotle spoke of philosophy , botany , medicine and many disciplines of those times and from then began the teacher – student bond.

Teaching has evolved from centuries and today , we are witnessing a sea change in the world of education in the various disciplines that are being taught , the methods of teaching and the techniques used to teach different disciplines .

In a similar manner , the methods employed to teach foreign languages have also undergone radical changes and today one can witness different techniques which help a teacher communicate the subject better with his students.

Teaching foreign languages has undergone a lot of changes with many theories being put forth by linguists since two centuries .

World over language experts have dedicated their lives to identify methods to assist teachers towards this goal.

In recent years , one can witness a sudden spurt in various disciplines with a need to incorporate foreign languages . This need based approach , to learn a foreign language amongst students who are pursuing full fledged professional courses , is increasing by the year and the trend will continue with greater importance , attached to learning a foreign language.

This learning process stems from a basic requirement that some students in a professional course would need to enhance their competency levels with the acquisition of one or more foreign languages.

Learning a foreign language , in the past would not have been an attractive option when compared to medicine , engineering , law and management studies .

But times are changing and the trend has changed .In a very competitive globalised world , students have suddenly realised the importance of learning foreign languages and they rush to register at

centres offering foreign languages.

It is no longer a shock when we see , engineers who , now pursue the learning of a foreign language along with their engineering subjects. Today , a paradigm shift is witnessed in the student's attitude towards learning a foreign language.

Many professionals are heading to countries beyond the seas , equipped with foreign language skills.

In such a scenario , students who , once upon a time , learnt foreign languages purely to discover the language , the culture and the society of the other country , are no longer , in a majority in foreign language schools.

If students were planning to learn a foreign language and leave for better prospects abroad , a second trend is also visible , today . That is the entry of multi –nationals into the country , thanks to globalisation.

In the early 90's when India was freed from a controlled economic scenario and welcomed a liberalised economy , globalisation made its impact in India too.

Since more than two decades , India has witnessed a dynamic shift in its economy and the entry of Multi National Companies has triggered a very healthy and competitive growth.

Not wanting to be left behind in this competition , students have also jumped in to get an edge over their competitive rivals.

Learning a foreign language has become an integral part of learning today and it promises to become even more challenging in the near future.

Today , colleges offering management studies have foreign languages taught simultaneously along with mainstream management studies.

One such course , where learning a foreign language has become an indispensable option is the discipline of Hotel Management.

In the early 90's when millions of students had access to only Arts, Commerce , and Science , new disciplines were introduced in several Indian universities.

Some universities recognised the importance of imparting foreign language skills to hotel management students and introduced French in the syllabus.

### French in the BHM course

Hotel management students have the unique opportunity to interact with tourists from all over the globe and French is spoken by people in more than five continents.

The second most likely possibility was that students of hospitality management could work abroad in many distinguished hospitality chains across the globe and in cruise liners.

A second major reason for French in the BHM program, is largely due to the impact of French gastronomy on world cuisine. The impact of French culinary knowledge and skills has been so profound that, even today, some of the basic and best techniques of cooking which originated in France, are followed throughout the world.

Escoffier's contribution to the world of gastronomy is unparalleled and The French influence in the world of gastronomy has been widely accepted and adopted in many countries.

The vocabulary used to describe different methods of cooking, different types of cuts of vegetables and meats are relevant even today and hospitality management students learn the same lexicon today.

French culinary words like julienne, brunoise, mise-en-place, entrecôte, flambée etc, to name a few, are learnt by the students, in the kitchens all over the world.

Teaching French in such a need based approach requires the teacher to reflect and adopt some new techniques to ensure that the student has learnt the minimum requirement of French grammar coupled with French gastronomy.

A French teacher in such an institution, is constantly forced to think, and reinvent his strategy to teach French so that the students acquire the basic competencies of spoken and written French, spread over 3 or 4 semesters of the course.

The first major challenge is to teach a foreign language to a group of students who come from different social strata and from all parts of the country with varied linguistic backgrounds.

It could be even more complex when some students are linguistically challenged in English and they are expected to learn yet another foreign language, French.

The task becomes more arduous and challenging when a teacher has to teach only Hospitality French. Decades ago, when French was taught in colleges of Bangalore, French was taught using the old method prevalent in those times, the grammar and translation method.

French teachers would have to teach the required amounts of French grammar and vocabulary as was required and they had to dispense off this knowledge with the help of a few methods which existed then and suggested by the experts.

Some of the French methods which then existed were better suited to a French learner and not to an Indian scenario. It was generally felt that the Basics of French grammar like articles, nouns and verbs were not taught in such methods and that level of French grammar was of a very high level for such students.

The second challenge was to complete the recommended French syllabus in a very short duration of 40 hours in a given semester.

The third challenge is to teach a class of 75 which is usually the norm in the Indian classroom. Packed class rooms with students unable to hear the teacher, and the teacher trying to communicate with all the students is an accepted reality in the Indian education scenario.

In such a situation, it is a herculean task for the French teacher to be an effective teacher.

The next challenge faced by a French teacher is to keep pace with the growing demands of the students.

Times have changed and so have the needs of the students. Today the teacher cannot remain a spectator to the demands of the students and insist on teaching French that was readily available in a few dozen methods available to learn a foreign Language.

Today the French teacher in a hospitality management college needs to grow with the demands of the changing scenario and to motivate the students to learn better.

Firstly, The French teacher, in a Hotel Management college needs to train himself and learn the intricate details of the functioning of the hotel. He needs to understand the functioning of the four core departments of a hotel namely, the reception, the kitchen, the restaurant and housekeeping before teaching the same in French.

A French teacher cannot remain loyal to teaching French grammar and vocabulary as he taught in a foreign language school with the help of a few French methods.

He also needs to use the latest teaching methods such as the A-V method coupled with teaching aids like a language lab. The use of such modern methods helps to motivate the students learn better and to succeed in the teaching-learning process.

As a teacher of French in a hotel management class, initially it was a challenge teaching French, as the requirements of these students were totally different from those learning French as a foreign language.

When French was introduced two decades ago, the existing French methods were more suited for a group of French students and not the Indian situation.

A detailed analysis of the then existing syllabus could help us identify the lacunae that existed and a fresh look into the syllabus was initiated.

After repeated discussions and deliberations, new methods of Hospitality French, more suitable to the Indian context were introduced and the gap between teaching and learning has gradually decreased.

However in an attempt to make the French syllabus more relevant and interesting to the students, a new A-V method has proven to be more effective.

With this new initiative, it is felt that this new method of teaching has the potential to ensure that students learn better and are motivated to perform better.

Secondly, the entire French syllabus has been discussed with all the stakeholders in the college. Based on their suggestions, the entire French syllabus has been reworked in college and the A-V method has been introduced. With this method, all French lessons are taught using ppt's, videos and small clippings of films using the required vocabulary of the hotel industry.

The vocabulary of the hotel industry with the basics of French grammar has been combined and a syllabus is prepared for students.

This shift to an AV method has been extremely useful as huge classes can be easily managed and the time taken to communicate with the students is very limited.

The A-V method of teaching gives the teacher the advantage to move away from the text book and yet deliver the vocabulary and grammar of French in a short span of time.

Some grammar topics have been carefully identified and selected which can be taught in a class of French for beginners and completed much later in other successive semesters.

For example, when teaching adjective possessives, it is initially suggested to teach only the words "my" and "your" and later complete the rest.

Ex- Where is my car? Your car is in front of the hotel.

Such an approach helps the students understand the concept of adjective possessives and its usage and they find it easier to learn them better later.

Secondly, more emphasis is given to the learning and assimilation of the limited hotel management vocabulary in French by constantly repeating the vocabulary and grammar.

The method of repetition has proved to be extremely useful to students as it helps them learn better.

For example , when explaining the topic on nouns and articles , It is proposed to teach only those nouns which are required in the Hospitality industry.

In conclusion , one could reiterate that the teacher of French has to always invent the best mechanism to deliver the language to students , based on the needs of students and the discipline for which , French is being taught and that there is no one perfect mechanism to teach French .

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