



A study on Teaching French as a Foreign Language in
Oman: An Exploration of Students' Perceptions about
Learning French

دراسة حول تدريس اللغة الفرنسية كلغة أجنبية في سلطنة عمان: استكشاف
تصورات الطلبة حول تعلم اللغة الفرنسية

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Abstract

The current study intended to identify the perceptions of grade 11th Omani students towards learning French as a foreign language (FFL) at Sohar Secondary School in Sohar, the Sultanate of Oman. The researcher attempts to find out the difficulties encountered by the learners regard learning French as a foreign language by exploring their opinions and where these difficulties lie. Furthermore, teachers of French language in the school were involved in this study where the researcher tries to recognize these difficulties from the teachers' point of view. The sample was selected randomly and was consisted of (6) male students of grade 11th. A questionnaire was developed after reviewing the educational literature related to the language learning difficulties especially French language. Students' responses were analyzed and tabulated. Evidenced by the results from this study that most of the students generally showed positive attitude towards learning of French regardless the difficulties they encountered. From the teachers' point of view, the high level of learning difficulties was related to the student. This study will be beneficial for teachers' training sessions and curriculum development.

هدفت الدراسة الحالية الى التعرف على تصورات الطلاب تجاه تعلم اللغة الفرنسية كلغة اجنبية لدى طلاب الصف الحادي عشر العمانيين في مدرسة صحار الثانوية بصحار، سلطنة عمان. من خلال هذه الدراسة تحاول الباحثة التعرف على الصعوبات التي تواجه الطلاب في تعلم اللغة الفرنسية كلغة أجنبية وذلك من خلال استكشاف آرائهم وأين تكمن هذه الصعوبات. علاوة على ذلك، فلقد شارك معلمو اللغة الفرنسية بالمدرسة في هذه الدراسة حيث تحاول الباحثة معرفة الصعوبات التي تواجه المتعلمين من وجهة نظر المعلمين. تم اختيار عينة الدراسة عشوائيا وقد تألفت من (6) طلاب ذكور من الصف الحادي عشر وقد تم تطوير الاستبانة بعد مراجعة الادب التربوي المتعلق بصعوبات تعلم اللغة وخاصة اللغة الفرنسية. تم تحليل استجابات الطلاب و جدولتها. يتضح من نتائج هذه الدراسة أن معظم الطلاب عموما أظهروا موقفا إيجابيا نحو تعلم اللغة الفرنسية بغض النظر عن الصعوبات التي واجهتهم. أما من وجهة نظر المعلمين، فقد كان مستوى صعوبات التعلم ذات الصلة بالطلاب عاليا. هذه الدراسة ستكون مفيدة في دورات تدريب المعلمين وتطوير المناهج.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

During learning process, every learner faces a difficulty, a problem or a pause, as well as the acquisition of new information, acquiring new skill, and solving a problem. Therefore, the success in overcoming the learning difficulties helps in achieving the goals of the learning process (Othman, 1999).

Teaching French language besides English has a great impact in refining and building an open-minded and versed generation. Reliance on the Arabic language in dealing with government agencies and the lack of knowledge of the basic foreign languages is one of the thorniest challenges that hinder the process of applying electronic transactions and restrict the spread globally. Accordingly, the approval of foreign language teaching is one of the most important opportunities and one of the imperatives of the twenty-first century. French language, like other world languages, represents a knowledge, culture, philosophy and art and comes in second place proliferation after the English language. The acquisition of a French language as a foreign language represents an important factor in the field of communication, where the mutual dependence between languages, civilizations and cultures. The necessity of the acquisition of multiple languages for the student in Oman is that it opens a new academically and professionally horizons in the foreseeable future, along with the policies of diversification of sources of income (www.shabiba.com).

The strategy of adding French language as a certified scholastic curriculum is a recent and positive addition by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in the Sultanate of Oman to upgrade the community in a renewed world where the boundaries of time and space fade. Moreover, it is a strategy that is very successful by all standards if carried out according to the guidelines given which is in the early and first grades. There are many Arab and foreign studies and statistics that indicate in its entirety that the child is able to absorb and acquire a foreign language besides the native language.

Problem of the study

In the current academic year 2013/2014, the Ministry of Education (MOE) in the Sultanate of Oman started to include French Language in the curriculum of grades 11 and 12 as an optional subject.

According to the students' performance at the end of the first semester from the academic year 2013/2014, it was noticed that students were facing some difficulties in learning French. This was obvious through the students' written works and class tests (Figures, 1 & 2). This was a reason of interest to the researcher as it relates to her field of specialization in teaching foreign language. Therefore, the importance of this study appeared in an attempt to detect learning difficulties among the students of grade 11 enrolled in French language subject, with the purpose of improving the process of teaching the language in schools.

Objectives

This study aims to address the type and degree of learning difficulties encountered by Omani grade 11 students following the French Curriculum through the followings:

- Identify the pedagogical difficulties from teachers' point of view.
- Determine type and degree of difficulty encountered by Omani grade 11 students.

Research Questions

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the difficulties encountered by Omani learners of FFL from the teachers' point of view?
2. What are the perceptions of Omani students in learning FFL?

3. What is the type and degree of difficulty in students' written performance?

Summary of research design

Research Qs.	Instrument	Data collection procedure	Data analysis procedure
Q1. Teachers' perception	Interview	2 teachers 30 min. Field notes	Thematized the emerging patterns/themes
Q2. Students' perception	questionnaire	Distributed in-class 6 students	Descriptive statistics
Q3. Students' performance	Exam papers (Summative assessment) In-class written activities	Selected a sample of written performance from each 6 student	Error analysis

Table (1)

Significance of the Study

The French language teachers in Sohar Secondary School have noted a low achievement level of the students in French subject as well as some difficulties concerning students' performance. Therefore, there was a need to understand students' perceptions towards learning French. Moreover, this study is considered as a vital issue in language learning where the French language is new in the field of governmental education in the Sultanate of Oman. Consequently, it is the first educational study in the region that have not already been dealt with research or study in this subject.

Accordingly, it may help teachers of French language in recognizing some of their learners' difficulties and help them to ease and overcome them. On the other hand, it could be helpful for the curriculum planning and development by obtaining insightful information about the difficulties faced by the students in learning French language. Furthermore, findings from this study may help in review the education system to be synchronized with the needs of the community and the requirements of the labor market.

CHAPTER2: Literature Review

As indicated in Tagliante (2006) that foreign language is the language learnt by people who do not have this language as their mother tongue. This was confirmed in Defays (2003) by referring to that teaching of FFL means teaching French to foreigners or non-Native speakers. He explained that the initial methods used in teaching a foreign language were the same methods that used in teaching a mother tongue. Thereafter, it was distinguished between the mother tongue teaching and foreign language teaching. Moreover, this agreed with Tagliante (2006) in that evolution of French language teaching as a foreign language has begun in the second half of the twentieth century when French people began to fear of comparing French with English in the world. They realized that they need especial policies and curricula for FFL so they have combined their efforts in this field consequently.

In 1981 and by the request of the Ministry of National Education in France, the International Center for Educational Studies CIEP has configured a working team to work in the field of teaching FFL. Thus, especial education concerning teaching this language as a foreign language has formed a different pole from teaching French as a mother tongue.

French as a foreign language

It was pointed out by Abdou Diop (Secretary-General of Francophonie) that French language occupies the second place of international learning languages, and that the French language is the language used after English in the international organizations as well as it is the working language of the United Nations Organization and its official language with other five languages (English, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, Chinese). Also, it is the working language in the European Union in addition to English and German.

In addition of being a language of communication, it is a valuable language because it is linked to defending human rights, tolerance and humanity. Furthermore, it is the language of non-governmental institutions such as, the Red Crescent, Doctors without Borders, Doctors of the World, and ASF as well as the only language used in the International Court of Justice.

A contrastive Analysis for Arabic and French

Arabic language is officially one of the six languages used in the United Nations. More than 300 million people in the world are using this language as a mother tongue. Arabic language includes about 28 characters, reaching up to ninety letters according to the different addition of shapes, marks, vowels and to their position in the words. Writings in Arabic start from write to left. It is considered as a Semitic language with a grammatical system which based on a structure of root and pattern. According to Hayder and al. (2005), it is also considered as a root-based language with not more than 10000 roots and 900 patterns. Darwish, (2002) stated that the structure of Arabic language based on words that contains nouns/verbs/particles in which nouns and verbs are derived from roots by applying templates (patterns) to the roots to generate stems and then introducing prefixes and suffixes.

Unlike Arabic language, French is one of the Latin languages of the Roman Empire, as well as Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, Catalan and Romanian

(Meftouh & Kamil, 2009). It contains about 26 letters with the structure of Subject /Verb/Object in word order, except when the object is a pronoun. It is a mother tongue of 72 to 160 million people in many countries whereas a second or third language for about 280 to 500 million people (Wikipedia, 2008). Some of the Arab countries are speaking French language and use it officially as administrative language such as Maghreb, Tunisia, Mauritania and Algeria.

Courtyllon (2003) wondered about the methodical overlap process consideration of near or after the mother tongue to a foreign language. According to what she thought, learning a foreign language depends on two main processes:

- 1) Process of Reception: in order for human to get used to a new language, he must be able to decode and receive that language in terms of sounds, tones, vocabulary, grammar rules ...etc.

However, if the mother tongue and the foreign language are convergent, there is a good possibility of understanding the text during the reception. Thus, forecasting for meaning without the need to divide the text into partial elements in order to understand; this is often true during the early stages of language learning. Therefore, teachers with native language convergent to the foreign language and teaching first levels should take this point into consideration.

- 2) Process of Remembering: This process is necessary in foreign language learning as it is linked to the process of reception. After receiving the texts and their existence in memory, the replaying and repetition process of the learned texts helps the student to express in the foreign language. Hence, the more the foreign language is convergent to the mother tongue the more easily and faster the learning process. Therefore, the department of foreign language curriculum development must take into consideration the near or after of the first and foreign languages.

In a report done by Maddieson (1986) containing a comparison of the Arabic language with other languages, he stated that the Arabic phonemic inventory compared to some spoken language sample from the world (about 317 language) were included in the UCLA Phonological Segment Inventory Database.

Newman (2002) approved that Arabic diverges significantly from what is ordinary within UPSID. Most of the areas of divergence include the number of consonants, consonant-vowel ratio, and, especially, the high number of consonant segments that are unique to Arabic, most notable of which are the pharyngealized sounds. Mostly known that, French speakers find that speaking Arabic is just as difficult as other non-Arabic speakers to acquire them, whereas they do not generally pose any problems in the pronunciation of French for Arabic speakers (ElGibali, 2005). He reported that both languages share a predilection for the dental area (as opposed to the alveolar focus in English, for example). Only thirty-five languages within UPSID that have stop phonemes in five different places of the articulation and Arabic is one of those languages.

Previous Studies

A study conducted by Aqra' (2008) entitled "Syntactic and Morphological Overlaps in Learning French among Yemenis Students" - students of the University of Dhamar. Through the work of the researcher as a teacher of French in the French Language Department at the University of Dhamar, he has monitored a lot of mistakes, especially written mistakes, in spite of the ongoing correction for these mistakes, which returned initially to the mixing of students between what they know in their native language and their learned language. The significance of this study, which dealt with morphological and grammatical mistakes committed by students when writing in French, is the attempt of researcher to find some explanations and

answers to the following questions: (1) Find out what morphological and grammatical errors committed by our students consistently when writing in French, (2) What are the causes of these errors?

Itma (2009): learning difficulties of students at the French Department at Al Najah National University in Nablus: This study aimed to identify the difficulties faced by the students of the French language department in learning the French language at Al Najah National University. The results of the study were as follows:

(1) Students facing many difficulties in learning the French language, which leads to not having adequate and appropriate level

(2) Learning difficulties faced by students are either linked to language difficulties, teachers in the department, or psychological difficulties or cultural difficulties.

(3) Language difficulties fall within the grammar and vocabulary learning difficulties, writing and comprehension, and the practice of research, and result from the lack of use of language, the difficulty of using vocabulary in the appropriate text, and the presence of multi-meaning words.

(4) Most of these difficulties are linguistic difficulties, and there is also a difficulty in the traditional culture of learning a foreign language through the use of the mother tongue (resorting to Translation).

(5) There are difficulties related to teachers, where she spoke about teacher training (Most teachers do not have sufficient experience; due to lack of availability of teachers, where the university is obliged to accept all of the teachers even who do not have sufficient experience).

(6) Psychological difficulties related to the way of thinking, acting, and the relationship between student and teacher.

(7) Cultural difficulties: the result of the disparity that exists between the French culture and the Palestinian culture.

Bernard (2010): *The Practice of Theater and Linguistic Insecurity: an example of French language education in Jordan*. Within this study, which concerns in teaching languages and entitled (elements in order to teach French as a foreign language in Jordan), the researcher thought about the importance of the practice of theater in the French language subject in Jordanian universities. The significance of this study is that it addresses the entrance to the theater in teaching French language and its benefits in the management of students' linguistic anxiety and fears.

This study confirms that the theatrical activities give social and linguistic aside in a particular context, they are; for example, help in practice the French language creatively during the Undergraduate, so it must be supplied with classic and contemporary plays, and direct students from full technician course to play text writing activity and representation on the stage.

French Language Project in Oman

In the beginning of the current academic year 2013/2014, the Ministry of Education started to include French language as an optional subject in the curriculum for grades eleventh and twelfth of post-basic education and to be taught in (4) lessons per week. This project has been launched in a pilot application at 4 schools in the Sultanate to be considered in the course of the experiment. Moreover, the progress of the experiment is followed-up and will be evaluated to agree the expansion of the project. Schools were chosen to apply the project; two schools in Muscat and two schools in the governorate of Batinah North in Sohar. The number of students who chose the optional subject during the first semester of the academic year 2013/2014 reached (182) students. However, the pilot application lasts for two years to be evaluated by an independent panel to look into the possibility of expansion. This trend comes from the Ministry in the context of that the (MOE) pursuing towards

the development of the study plan through diversification of elective courses and expansion in teaching different languages, where German language was introduced in the academic year 2012/2013 and the Ministry is monitoring and evaluating the progress of the experiment currently.

Furthermore, the French curriculum has been chosen with two parts and published in the French Publishing House Maison Des Langues in collaboration with the specialists from the Omani French Center; note that the new textbooks titled (Pourquoi pas!) were applied in Qatar and Bahrain. Moreover, (MOE) has contracted with the publishing house (Maison Des Langues) to edit the textbook in accordance with the proposals of the specialists as well as backing-up the book with a range of stories and supportive educational resources to enrich and enhance the capabilities of students to speak French. Therefore, a special version for the schools of the Sultanate was released.

In addition, teaching staff consists of Arab teachers mastering the French language and have Master's degree in French Language.

CHAPTER3: METHODOLOGY

In this study, the researcher has used a descriptive analytical approach; an approach based on a set of research procedures that rely on the collection of facts and data, classified, processed and analyzed sufficiently and accurately to extract its meaning, and access to the results or generalizations about the phenomenon under study, because this approach is appropriate to carry out such a study.

Subjects

The study population constitutes of two teachers of the French language and 12 students of grade 11 from post-basic education school in Sohar, Batinah North governorate. The sample involved all the population of the study;

however, the number of questionnaires that have been retrieved reached 6 only.

This was due to the final exams where students started to be absent from the school. Therefore, only six students with ages around 16 years old were involved in the study; all students are enrolled in French class as an optional subject; with four French classes per week. The students' first language is Arabic; the second (first foreign) language is English and they are all enrolled in French language classes as a third language (second foreign language). Omani Arabic is the mother tongue and the official language in public schools in the Sultanate of Oman, note that the French language taught only in four chosen schools in the Sultanate, according to records of the Ministry of Education for the academic year (2013/2014).

Instrumentation and Design

This is a qualitative study and data were collected through interviews, document analysis, and questionnaire. The researcher has built some items of the questionnaire in order to identify the nature of the French language learning difficulties among students. After reviewing the literature on the subject of educational difficulties learning foreign languages especially French language and previous studies related to the topic of the study, the study tool was constructed primarily of two parts. The first part consists (17) statements (see Appendix 1), to be filled out regarding students' perceptions and attitudes towards French language learning using five-point Likert scale as follows: Strongly Agree/Agree/Don't Know/Disagree/Strongly Disagree. As for the second part, it consists of two questions; question 19 allows the students to choose more than one answer.

Data collected from the questionnaire were quantitative. Therefore, the responses were analyzed, percentages were calculated and tabulated. The other type of data collected from the interviews was qualitative. The responses were categorized according to each topic they related.

CHAPTER4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The aim of this study is to explore students' perceptions about the difficulties in learning French language. As well as determine the level of difficulty in learning French as a foreign language in schools of the Sultanate from the viewpoint of teachers. This study was limited to a small sample including six students from grade 11th of post-basic education school. All the students speak Arabic as their mother tongue, English as a foreign language, and are enrolled in optional French language classes as a second foreign language. With permission of the French teachers the questionnaire was distributed to the students. Data were analyzed and compared to each other as well as the questionnaire's responses were transferred and analyzed to get the results.

This paper attempts to answer the following research questions:

Q1: What are the difficulties encountered by Omani learners of FFL from the teachers' point of view?

The researcher had interviewed two French language teachers in the school. The interview questions revolved around several topics, difficulties related to the student, difficulties related to the teacher and difficulties related to the curriculum. According to the analysis of the data obtained from the interviews, it showed that the difficulties faced by the learners came generally in Average level. It showed a High level of difficulty related to the students; whereas difficulties related to the teacher and curriculum were Average.

The difficulties faced by learners in learning French language, which specifically related to the students themselves, are probably due to a lack of student interest in that language, not aware of the importance of the language for their undergraduate study in the future which thus lower their motivation, as well as the reluctance of parents to follow-up the student in studying this subject.

However, the difficulty of learning the French language does not go back to the weakness of the students in the French language solely, but also due to that the inventory of language in this subject for some students is not enough, which affects their level of language so they will not be able to understand, analyze and composing the texts, and lack of awareness of the meanings and semantics of these texts through their mother tongue.

On the other hand, the researcher attributes the average level of the difficulties related to the teacher to that the teacher offers all what he has of expertise in this area, but the difficulty he faces is in the receptivity of the student to that subject and the encouragement to study well; if these were not available it will lead to distract the student and unwillingness to learn new language.

Q2: What are the perceptions of Omani students in learning FFL?

A questionnaire was distributed to the sample of the study to fill out in order to obtain some information about students' perceptions of learning French as a second foreign language. The questionnaire was divided into two parts for the purpose of analysis.

As for part 1, by analyzing the responses (Appendix 1) it was noted that most participants with (66.6%) were strongly agreed that learning French is fun. The majority of students with (83.3%) also strongly agreed that they like to listen to people speaking French. On the other hand, the percentage of motivation varied between students who strongly agreed (33.3%), agreed (50%) and did not know (16%), to indicate that not all of the students have the incentive to learn French. Interestingly, no student disliked French where those who did not know and those who disagreed have an equal percentage. Moreover, for the reason of learning French as an optional subject, the percentage of students who stated that they did not know was equal to the percentage of students who disagreed. For statements 6-7, the majority of the students think that French has a positive effect on the individual personality.

Moreover, the statements 8-10 have the similar percentage of students who showed that they are not aware of the significance of French language in their future study and career. Similarly, the percentages of the statements 11-12 (50%) were equal for students who did not know how to identify their need for French language outside the classroom. While the rest of the students divided into half with (50%) of students who agreed on the need of French when travelling abroad and (50%) of them who disagreed on the need of French when searching in the internet. Likewise, (50%) of students think they don't have the time to improve their language whereas only (16%) of students showed that they can do so and (33.3%) who did not know. Noticeably, most of the students found grammatical structure difficult and the lack of vocabulary hinders the language production.

Responses to part 2 (Q18: *How often do you use French outside the classroom?*) showed a lack of using the language outside the classroom. No students were practicing the language a lot outside the classroom (0%), whereas equal percentage (16%) of students who use it a little. Accordingly, most of students (50%) do not use the language outside the classroom. (Table 1)

Table (1): Responses to part 2 (Q18: *How often do you use French outside the classroom?*)

A lot	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
0%	16%	16%	50%

According to part 2 (Q19: *What do you think the most difficult skill in learning French? (Student can choose more than one)*), students indicated higher percentage for writing and speaking (83.3% & 50%).

Thus, productive skills were considered to be the most difficult skills in French language. On the other hand, small percentage (16%) represented listening skill and no students (0%) considered reading skill as a problem. (Table 2)

Table (2): Q19: *What do you think the most difficult skill in learning French?**(Student can choose more than one)*

Writing	Reading	Listening	Speaking
83.3%	0%	16%	50%

The results of this study are consistent with the results of the previous studies of (AlMaqtari (2000), Aqra' (2008), and Itma (2009)). The results in the study by Maqtari (2000) indicated that the difficulty of understanding the French texts do not related to the weakness of the students in the French language, but also to that general information especially the linguistic one for some students is not enough; the results of the study by Itma (2009) showed that the linguistic difficulties fall within the difficulties of learning grammar, vocabulary, absorption and research that due to the lack of use of the language, the difficulty of using the vocabulary in the appropriate text, and the existence of multi-meanings words.

Q3: What is the type and degree of difficulty in students' written performance?

Through the access to the papers of students who are studying the French language in schools, the researcher noted that the students suffer from several difficulties, including:

- **Form Difficulties**

Students find it difficult to conjugate verbs with pronouns (je/tu/il/elle/nous/vous/ils/elles) figure (1). This is due to that students cannot remember the form of the verb with different pronouns. Courtillon (2003) pointed out that if we ask the students to remember how to conjugate verbs with the pronouns we are overloading their memory more than it can afford. Thus, they make mistakes especially because French language is heavy in terms of form.

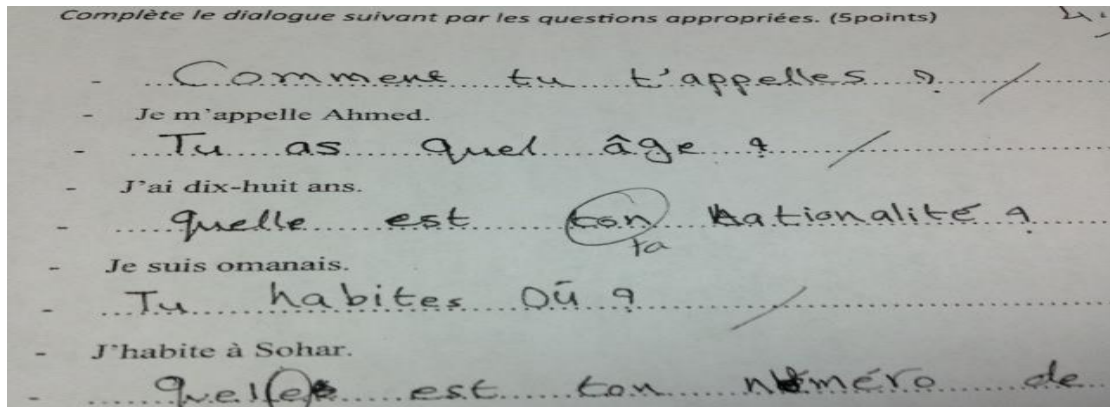


Figure (1)

Another example of Form difficulties are those related to the type and number. The use of the word depends on the student's knowledge of the type and number of the word preceded, as well as to know and distinguish the form of the desired word from the previous words; Figure (2). Moreover, there are some difficulties related to the rule dictation as the difficulty to match the subject with the verb. This confirms what Niquet (1991) referred to in his speaking about the difficulties facing the teaching of French as a foreign language in his speaking "Grammatical Writing" which includes verbs conjugating. He says that some forms of the verbs constitute sources of errors and difficulty for students because they are uttered in the same way but written in different ways.

For example student wrote:

une professeur instead of *un professeur*

Questions	Réponses
1- Il y a des ordinateurs sur toutes les tables ?	Non, il y a pas ^{de} des ordinateurs sur toutes les tables /
2- Il y a des filles et des garçons ?	Oui, il y a ^{des} des filles et des garçons /
3- Il y a un professeur ?	Oui, il y a ^{un} professeur..... /

Figure (2)

- Spelling Difficulties

It was noted that the students suffer from spelling difficulties, for example; there was confusion between the letters *s* and *z*; e.g. students wrote

diz heures instead of *dix heures*

As well as writing the gerund without the acute accent (´) like,

elle est arriver instead of *elle est arrivée*

According to Niquet (1991), he believes that students' errors pop up in the spelling from several laws by the given linguistic category, the letter *S* is an illustrative example of this when it comes between two vowels it is pronounced *Z* like *rose*, while if it was doubled or accompanied by one vowel it pronounced *S* like *valse* or *basse*.

- Pronunciation Difficulties

Through the interview with the French teachers, they were asked about the phonological problems or difficulties facing the Omani students and they mentioned that students have several difficulties in pronouncing the letters.

For example, mixing between the letters *B/P* which is mostly due to that the letter *P* is not exists in Arabic language. Similarly, mixing between the letters *S/Z* when reading words like *Il est dix heures* by connecting between *dix heures* they pronounce it *S* instead of *Z*. As well as the difficulty in pronouncing the vowel letters whether a separate letter e.g. (é, è, e, o, u) or accompanied by another letter e.g. (oe, eu, au, ou) especially if some of these letters do not exist in students' language (figure 1). Procher (2004) refers to the importance of the pronunciation in the language where the word offers the first social identity of the speaker and that the individual is socially classified as the way they pronounce.

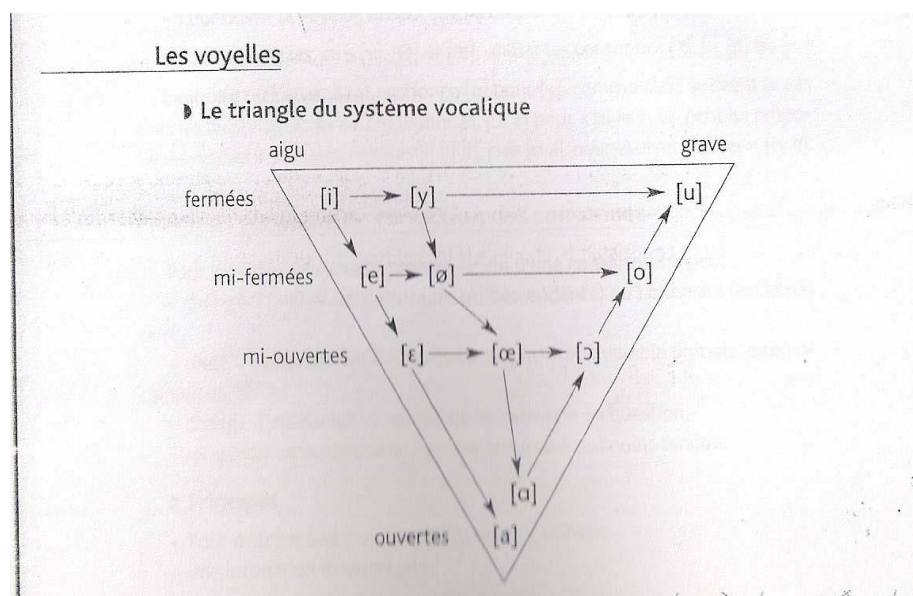


Figure (3): French vowel letters' system

- Meaning Difficulties

There are many difficulties facing the students related to meaning, for example, students suffer from understanding vocabulary in the context. This is because the vocabulary meaning changes in the context, and the problem is that students memorize solo meanings, are not able to understand it if found in another context. For example, as Tagliante (2006) explained the word "marre" which means "copious water" but in the phrase "J'en ai marre" it means "I am tired".

CHAPTER5: CONCLUSION

The findings of this case study are based on a small sample of six male students from grade 11th of post-basic education. The study was aimed to shed light on the students' perceptions in learning FFL and to identify the difficulties facing Omani learners. By and large, after analyzing the participants' responses it was noticed that all of the participants showed a positive attitude towards learning French language. However, large

percentage showed that studying French is difficult especially the grammatical rules which are totally different from English grammar. In terms of skills, productive skills were considered the most difficult than the receptive skills especially, speaking and writing. In my opinion, this is due to the lack of vocabulary which is the lack of using the language. Since productive skills require sufficient level of vocabulary besides a grammatical structure competence, most students acknowledged it as problem.

Limitations

The study has several limitations. The first limitation was related to the small size of the study which consisted of only (6) male students from grade 11 of post-basic education. Thus, the number of completed responses for the questionnaire was limited as well as the gender. Subsequently, generalization of the study is not appropriate and further research is needed.

The second limitation was the period of time. The students' perceptions about the difficulties facing them in learning French as a foreign language were collected in one semester which may affect the validity of the results. Therefore, longitudinal studies are needed to be conducted.

The next limitation is the instrument used in this study. Since the questionnaire consists of (19) items only, this is insufficient to identify students' perceptions about difficulties of learning French as well as it may affect the students' responses validity since the data were collected by self-report questionnaire.

Implications for future practice

It is quite possible the use and exploitation of multilingualism in the educational and learning system. This may facilitate the learning of foreign languages for students if both of the languages were convergent. On the other

hand, the difference between the two languages may create an overlap which affects the recipient to change his linguistic habits.

In spite of the small sample of this study, it was a beneficial trial to shed a light on some of the difficulties facing grade 11 students in learning French as a foreign language. On the basis of the findings, teachers can develop different teaching strategies to help their students to overcome the difficulties they are facing. Furthermore, instructional goals can be reviewed and adjusted to meet the needs of learners of foreign languages.

Recommendations

In light of the objectives and findings of the study, the researcher recommends the following:

- Provide schools with educational equipment and teaching aids; for education development and the advancement of the level of student.
- The need to focus on the preparation programs of French language teacher and the required training courses.
- Find a program for effective and helpful educational activities in French language classes and taking into account the official objectives of French language education.
- Prepare Training courses for teachers of the French language in the construction of diagnostic and evaluation tools to identify their students learning difficulties and mistakes and thus improve their performance.
- Conduct a study to determine the nature of the difficulties faced by the students in learning French language, related to the student, teacher and curriculum.

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Appendix

Please kindly answer the questionnaire statements according to the instructions contained in every part and I inform you that all the information that given will be kept confidential and will only be used for purposes of scientific research, expressing thanks and appreciation for your cooperation.

1: Please put X sign in the level at which it deems appropriate to your personal convictions.

No.	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Learning and speaking French is Fun					
2	I like to listen to people speaking French					
3	I really want to learn French					
4	I dislike French					
5	I only learn French because it's an optional course					
6	When someone speaks French, it shows that he/she is educated					
7	Speaking French well can create a good impression					
8	Learning French is important for my future					
9	Learning French can help me find better job opportunities					
10	Learning French is essential for my undergraduate and post graduate studies					

11	I need French when I travel abroad					
12	I need French when I search in the internet					
13	I think I can improve my French					
14	Learning French is difficult					
15	I don't have time to improve my French					
16	I find French grammar and structure difficult					
17	Lack of vocabulary makes understanding and communicating in French difficult					

2: How often do you use English outside the classroom?

A lot	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

3: What do you think the most difficult skill in learning French? (Student can choose more than one)

Writing	Reading	Listening	Speaking