

Challenges And Obstacles In Children Learning French.

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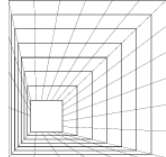
Abstract: Foreign language learning is a complex process influenced by a multitude of cognitive, emotional, social, and pedagogical factors. French occupies a significant place among the most widely taught languages in the world due to its history, culture, and international reach. However, despite its appeal, learning French poses numerous challenges for learners. This research aims to analyze the main obstacles encountered when learning foreign languages, with a particular focus on the case of French.

Key words: challenges, obstacles, learning French, children, second language teaching, difficulties.

Introduction. Learning a foreign language goes far beyond the simple memorization of grammatical rules or vocabulary. It is a complex process, influenced by cognitive, social, cultural, and affective variables. Among these dimensions, affective and psycholinguistic factors play a decisive but often underestimated role. They subtly influence motivation, self-confidence, communication skills, and the ability to process linguistic information.

Having a child is a miracle that God blesses every parent, it is a mission given to us to complete in the best way possible. Considering that since the period of pregnancy when the child is in the mother's womb until the age of 6 the child receives what is served to it by the parents /guardians, the family members and the society in general. But, not always parent unintentionally manage to do the best. Trying to make them happy parents sometimes do mistakes that will always regret. Or in the contrary, by putting limits on our children we give them lifelong happiness. Early childhood is the most important period of an individual's development and the greatest attention must be paid at this age. The way we feed children, protect them, the way we communicate, socialization, creation of skills and habits, etc. are some of the factors that directly affect their future. Parents, family members and the society that surrounds them are role model and the best lesson on how to behave with themselves and others. Children learn from what they see and experience. Language learning in children is often perceived as a natural and spontaneous process, facilitated by the cognitive plasticity and curiosity inherent in childhood. However, this perception obscures the many challenges and obstacles children may face, particularly when learning a second or foreign language such as French. These obstacles can be linguistic, cognitive, emotional, sociocultural, or even institutional. Understanding these difficulties is essential for adapting teaching practices and promoting effective learning from an early age.

In today's world children are surrounded by screens all around them: television sets, computers, tablets, and phones either to watch or play with. And some children even have access to their own tablet and phone, starting at a young age. All these devices help children in a way or another how to behave, learn new games, new languages etc. Children are those who learn a new language quicker and easier as their brain is fresh and has enough space to accumulate things. Language learning through technology has its pros and cons, as its use in an uncontrolled time can harm them a lot without being noticed by their parents.



1. Linguistic and cognitive challenges

- The complexity of the French linguistic system. French is a language with complex features, both phonetically (nasal sounds, obligatory liaisons), grammatically (agreement, conjugations, genders), and lexically (homophones, synonyms, idiomatic expressions). For a child whose mother tongue is not French, these characteristics represent real obstacles to fluent language acquisition.
- Cognitive overload in children. Learning a language requires the simultaneous mobilization of several cognitive functions (attention, memory, auditory processing, categorization). In children, these functions are still developing. Learning a foreign language can therefore cause cognitive overload, especially if it is integrated into a demanding academic environment.

2. Emotional and motivational obstacles

- Language anxiety in children. Even at a young age, some children experience a form of anxiety when confronted with a language they do not master. This anxiety may be linked to the fear of making mistakes, being judged by peers, or low self-esteem as a learner. It constitutes a significant obstacle to speaking out and actively engaging.
- Lack of intrinsic motivation. Motivation plays a crucial role in language learning. Weak or extrinsic motivation (such as academic commitments) can lead to superficial engagement in learning French, sometimes perceived as difficult or useless depending on the context, can lead to disinterest. Young children often learn a second language in a prescribed institutional setting. If the teaching approach is not fun and engaging, their motivation can quickly wane. The perceived lack of connection between the language being learned and daily life also limits their engagement.

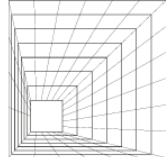
3. Sociocultural challenges

- Lack of exposure to the target language. A lack of opportunities to practice French in a real-life context (immersion, exchanges, French-language media) can slow learning. In some countries, French language teaching remains theoretical and relatively uninteractive, which limits the development of communicative skills. In many school settings, children only have access to French during class time. This limited exposure does not allow for sufficient immersion to foster natural language acquisition. Outside of school, media and social interactions may be conducted exclusively in the mother tongue.
- The importance of the language and culture of origin. Stereotypes or prejudices toward Francophone culture can constitute a psychological barrier. A fixed or idealized vision of French culture can also limit intercultural understanding, which is essential for successful language learning. Children from allophone or multilingual backgrounds may experience a form of identity conflict between their language of origin and the language being learned. In some cases, parents value the family language to the detriment of the second language, which can hinder emotional and symbolic investment in learning French.

4. Pedagogical and institutional difficulties

- Inadequate teaching methods. The exclusive use of traditional methods focused on grammar and translation can discourage learners. The lack of use of communicative approaches or project-based learning undermines motivation and teaching effectiveness. Too often, teaching French as a second language to children relies on methods that are overly academic or disconnected from their interests. The lack of use of games, songs, stories, and interactive activities can limit engagement and enjoyment of learning.
- Lack of teacher training. Not all teachers are trained in second language teaching for young children. A lack of understanding of the specific needs of young learners can lead to inappropriate teaching practices (too fast a pace, overly abstract vocabulary, little differentiated instruction).

5. The specific needs of children with special needs.



- Language or learning disorders. Some children have specific language disorders, attention deficit disorder, or dyslexia, dysphasia, etc.), which complicate the learning of an additional language. These children require individualized support, which is often lacking in standard programs.

- Situations of migration or precariousness. Migrant or refugee children may suffer from trauma, school dropouts, or a lack of educational continuity. These conditions weaken their ability to adapt linguistically and academically to a new language, particularly French.

Conclusion. Learning French for children, while enriching and promising, is fraught with multidimensional obstacles. These challenges must be rigorously analyzed to implement differentiated teaching strategies adapted to the children's cognitive, emotional, and sociocultural development. The challenge is to create a caring, motivating environment rich in linguistic input to enable each child, regardless of their background or specific needs, to acquire the French language with confidence and enjoyment.

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