

French Language at BVIMR- A Case Study

AJAY SAHNI¹, SANJOY ROY²

¹ Former H.O.D. (Department of foreign languages) Assistant Professor, Bharati Vidyapeeth Deemed to be University Institute of Management and Research

² Assistant professor, FMS, Bharati Vidyapeeth Deemed to be University Institute of Management and Research

Abstract- *Collaboration becomes an essential competency in the current knowledge society. In this study, a collaborative learning environment was designed to facilitate students in group collaboration. Instructional support strategies of friendship and meaningful learning tasks were applied to promote collaboration. In addition, the online file sharing tool DriveHQ was used to facilitate collaboration. Four classes of students used the learning environment to complete their final project in pairs. Results showed friendship and meaningful learning tasks helped to promote individual accountability and positive interdependence, and the application of progress reports proved useful for collaborating, cooperating and supervising the teaching and learning process. However, additional strategies might be needed for more effective collaboration to take place. Issues involved in this study are discussed.*

Indexed Terms- *Cooperation, collaboration, soft skills, French*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the prevailing information age, as the work is more based on knowledge, hence the concepts of interdisciplinary and complications are bound to come. The task completion is more dependent on team work than to be accomplished by one person. As stated by Barron, 2000, the ability to work collaboratively hence becomes highly valued in the present workplace (Barron, 2000). Students ought to learn how to work collectively when they are in schools so that the transition from the school to the workplace is less daunting (Chai & Tan, 2009). However in Indian context, it has been observed over so many years that students would develop a spirit of competition, and won't share with their peers. As a

result, as they progress to higher studies at Undergraduate and post graduate levels, this competition becomes fierce as a result of competitive spirit imbibed by the system, and eventually they land up in Industry that prefer to team work more than the individual working style. With this objective, the author identified a bigger purpose that was students' driven, and applied collaborative form of teaching and learning process in classes. As mentioned by Johnson and Johnson, 1994, clubbing the students in groups and asking them to work in a collaboration won't work naturally as it seems.

It is also essential that each of the group/team member is participating and actively involved in the allocated task, and overall group performs and achieves, and contribution by each and every member is notable and easily identifiable in which there has been notable contribution by each team member. Or else, they may be asked to get involved and work on different types/versions that may be aligned afterwards.

Launching any department in an already successful educational institute is a big challenge, especially when it is Department of Foreign languages; French and German languages. However, the idea was to make these two languages integrate within the management and IT programmes called as faculty of Management studies at Bharati Vidyapeeth (Deemed to be University), at its New Delhi campus, BVIMR. This case details the phases how these two languages were introduced within the already well received management education of BVIMR, Delhi and then further deliberates on the reasons of learning French language culture, thereby leading to the department of Foreign languages that became a USP, Unique Selling Proposition for the Institute for admissions at UG, BBA, BCA and PG, MBA programmes. There

are many lessons to be driven home as a result of reading this case, some of them being. (1)Launch, development and sustenance of a department in management institution.(2)Benefits of learning foreign languages.(3)Benefits of learning French vis-a-other foreign languages.(4)How personality is developed by learning a foreign language by application of Cooperative and collaborative form of teaching and learning.

II. POPULATION AND SAMPLE

Students studying under graduate and post graduate management programmes at Bharati Vidyapeeth (Deemed to be University) Institute of Management and Research, New Delhi. The age group of sample of students has been 18-23 years, and a total number of 600 students were observed over a period of six years and then, these observations that turned out to be repetitive, discussed with other faculty members teaching French, German, Spanish languages in the same institute were shared and common points were drawn.

III. DATA AND SOURCES

Secondary data was referred, and primarily websites. Moreover, the feedback was taken at the end of each class and then after deliberations with other foreign languages' professors, the below mentioned theoretical framework is structured, in a qualitative and descriptive methodology.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted in writing this case is the real life experience of the author, and is narrative. The readers are expected to extract following pertinent points: Secondary research was undertaken to explain the technical perspectives as well. However, the Purpose of this paper is broader, as it covers, management, foreign languages, especially French, personality development, soft skills, communication, strategy and other related domains. The observation, and the feedback received from the students of the institute after every class for six years consistently was also referred to while analysing, developing this case.

V. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The word GLOCAL, a hybrid of Global and Local is a word that denotes that due to development of Knowledge economy and Information technology, the world is on your palm, meaning that it is all about interconnectedness, integration and interdisciplinary approach. These 3 Is are instrumental in making this world as Global village, and, communication that is through Internet, Intra-net technologically, the languages are the mediums facilitating the exchange of ideas of products and services. Hence IT facilitates the transfer of data, information, but that data, information is through language. When one knows English, and another foreign language, like French, German, Spanish, the global accessibility is further enhanced.

Studies show that decisions made in your second language are more reason-driven than those made in a native language. Contrary to popular assumptions, when one deliberate in a second or third language, one gets aloof from the biases due to emotional connections with one's native language tongue. The author experienced the similar kind of shift in his decision making capacity, both in corporate and academic eco spaces. Learning, developing and teaching French language and culture made him take decisions that were concrete, clear headed, focussed and logical. Learning French, through proper grammatical structures, presentations, writing articles, letters and others were taught systematically, and are to be presented in the same structure, as a result, one needs to think in the structural ways, using one's left brain, hence decisions are more logical, without any biases, and emotions involved. Language learning also leads to pragmatic problem solving abilities at the sub-conscious level.

<https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/coming-to-france/studying-in-france/learning-french/article/10-good-reasons-for-learning>: This site of French Governments depicts the benefits of learning French language very well.

1. A world language: As per this site, there are more than 300 million people who speak French on the five continents. The OIF that is an organization of French speaking countries that has 88 members' states and governments, French is the second most widely

learned foreign language after English and the Fifth most widely spoken language in the world. Most importantly, the geographic penetration of French language is much more than other languages. Chinese is widely spoken according to the number of speakers owing to its own population that is largest in the world. French is also the only language, alongside English, that is taught in every country in the world. France operates the biggest international network of cultural institutes, which run French-language courses for close on a million learners.(2) A language for the international job market. (3) For a person who knows French language, s/he is better placed as far as international job market is concerned. France being one of the largest economies of the world, French language knowledge is a big plus as it is spoken in other countries as well, which were the French colonies. France is also a leading destination for foreign investments and France is a key economic partner.(3) The language of culture: French is the international language of cooking, fashion, theatre, the visual arts, dance and architecture. Knowledge of French offers access to great works of literature in the original French, as well as films and songs. The noted and world famous personalities who have contributed immensely are Victor Hugo, Moliere, Leopold Sendar , Edith Piaf, Jean-Paul Sartre, Alain Delon and Zinedine Zidane.(4) A language for travel. France is the world's top tourist destination and attracts more than 87 million visitors a year. Knowledge of even very basic French enables the visitor to have a good acquaintance with French culture, Art, Architecture, and visiting France, especially Paris becomes all the more enjoyable and memorable experience. Other than France, other Francophone (French speaking countries), also are a vista to gel well with the culture and warmth of those inhabitants.(5) Opportunities for higher education. Speaking French opens up opportunities to study at renowned French universities and business schools, ranked among the top higher education institutions in Europe and the world.(6) The other language of international relations. French is both a working language and an official language of the United Nations, the European Union, UNESCO, NATO, the International Olympic Committee, the International Red Cross, and International courts. French is the language of the three cities where the EU institutions are headquartered: Strasbourg, Brussels and

Luxembourg.(7) A language that opens up the world. An ability to understand French provides access to an alternative view of the world. One can follow French thinkers and leaders from all over the world and news from the leading French-language international media (e.g., TV5Monde, France 24 and Radio France Internationale). (8) A language that is fun to learn. French is an easy language to learn. There are many methods on the market that make learning French enjoyable for children and adults alike. (9) A language for learning other languages. French is also derived from Latin that is considered to be the mother of Romance languages. Hence, it provides a good base for Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and Romanian languages as well. Since a significant percentage; app. 33% of English vocabulary is derived from French, knowing French enhances the English language fluency as well, as, one is able to pronounce the French words and expressions correctly since they are widely used in English language, such as, en route, rendez-vous, etc.(10) The language of love and reason. First and foremost, learning French is the pleasure of learning a beautiful, rich, melodious language that is often called the language of love. It is accepted that French is spoken from Heart, and, heart is synonymous with love. Since French is also an analytical language owing to its rich grammar, concepts, phrases, expressions, that structure thought and develops critical thinking, which is a considered as a valuable skill for discussions and negotiations. These benefits would be repeatedly referred to by the author in the class, as a result of which , some students developed their French language studies to a great extent and continued studying French language after completion of their degree.

HOW IT ALL BEGAN: In the year 2014, the author of this case study drafted proposals of starting French language and sent them to some institutes, out of which BVIMR was one. The Director of that institute at once called him and discussed this launch further. However, at that time, German was being taught at BVCOE, Bharati Vidyapeeth College of Engineering. The then Director of Bharati Vidyapeeth (Deemed to be University) Institute of Management and Research, New Delhi remarked that since the number of students who were interested to learn foreign language were only 20-25, the subsequent year, i.e. 2005, they were going to launch BBA and BCA

programmes, so, Foreign languages would be made as a compulsory subject for the students to learn along with their UG and PG programmes. This narration that has been the most important, fruitful, and learning and development Projects for the author, as he has already been in Corporate sector, and had worked in various domains of Marketing, like, sales, business development, advertising, counselling marketing, presentations, events, sponsorships, trade fairs and others. His specialization had been in service industry and products' marketing as well. However, at that point of time, in the year 2002, he had already embarked upon his educational career oriented journey. While in his tenure with industry, he has already applied the concepts of relationship building, rapport creating, and PR with his clients that are now termed as CRM, his main business generation happened through references only. When he would counsel students, and take orientation sessions in foreign languages, he would relate all the personal and professional level experiences in front of the audience who were studying PG and UG courses at BVIMR, New Delhi. However, he had already been very well accepted in other notable foreign language institutes, like, YMCA, KUONI Academy of Travel, and other institutes affiliated to GGSIPU University as well.

What the author of this paper experienced was that there was hardly any difference between teaching and marketing. Rather teaching is itself like management, while marketing is also somewhat like teaching, as one is explaining and giving presentation to one's prospective client. In teaching, the author found that the students were like his clients to whom he had to deliver quality level teaching and training in French language and culture according to his/her, (students') level. Level here refers to intelligence, emotional and awareness, i.e. his IQ and EQ, and this was possible through the spirit of Empathy. Instead of bringing students to his level, he discovered that he needed to go down to their level, hold their hands and bring them to his level, i.e. he needs to reach out to the students. While studying in his second year, he started learning French language from Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, New Delhi, one of the oldest institutes of learning foreign languages. That developed him, as he was now feeling that he also knows something what others were not knowing,

otherwise he was totally a closed personality due to the inferiority complex developed as a result of his inability of speaking English, despite the fact that he passed from one of the best schools of Delhi of those times. While he came to teaching after having spent 13 years in industry, he decided that he would not teach through the medium of stress, strictness and other methods that make students distant from teachers, as in his case. He would also fear his teachers in the school and in the college. He experienced that a vacuum prevailed always between the teachers and students. Hence, new benchmarks were created, a totally new type of experience was witnessed by one and all, be the students, teachers, directors, as a totally new dimension of teaching was created, as a result of his efforts. Some of the most striking features of his sessions have been the following, (these are the outcome of more than 20 years of teaching, and feedback received from his students while he is teaching French, rudimentary Spanish, or management related subjects):

1. Empathy: He would empathize with his students. Some of the students were so close to him that they would share all their personal, professional issues with him. He would just listen to them patiently. His objective being, since he did not have anyone to whom he could share. He could feel the pain and relate to his students, colleagues well.
2. Style: The style appreciated by his students referred to as "It does not look like that they are learning or he was teaching". He would make teaching a joyful experience. He would write French in Devnagari script, so that students would start speaking French within the first week of learning. The moment one starts speaking, confidence is gained and interests develop further in learning the language.
3. Life skills: The best appreciation that he received had been that of life experiences, the students would remark year after year, that apart from learning French, they had learned how to live life from the author. This has been a kind of value addition that the author realized and experienced after 4-5 years of teaching. After every remarkable class, he would reflect and write them in his journal. As a result, he found that there has been a pattern, till these all peculiarities seeped

deep inside his conscious levels, and were stored, and would pop up, as and when the conducive situation would arise. In each and every class of his, his main focus would be on the following main points :

1. Cooperation and collaboration
2. Opportunity to speak in front of a class by explaining the concepts learnt
3. Sharing his failures and lessons learnt in life.
4. Inviting students to share their point of view on a particular topic
5. Inviting students to consult him on the subject concerned, or career or any personal and professional related concern(s)

Following was the counselling pitch/ main points that he would refer to while delivering his orientation sessions (direct speech)

1. Foreign language = for+ reign. If you want to reign the world then learn foreign language.
2. It leads to the development of your personality, communication skills, and confidence. Think of the situation when you are in the midst of an interview session, and everyone is pronouncing the expression, the French expressions that are used as they are in English but not pronounced like French, and you pronounce them correctly, the kind of impact you would create will put you totally different from others - *en route* (people pronounce this *enroutey.*, while it is to be pronounced as “aan route,” (the sound of t is that of ‘ t in the name Tilak. and “en” becomes like the sound in the word “Aunt”).

French is so much in our daily life that we even don't know about that fact. In the games of Badminton, Tennis, Volley Ball, the game starts with what???? The audience would say:”Love all,” then,” love one”, I would ask what this love is? The audience would look at each other, and were not aware about the reason. After few minutes, I would remark, “The word is a French word, i.e. *L'oeuf*, the sound of “F” is there, and “we all are mispronouncing it love all”, “one love” etc., as “we are not aware of this”. Even the news reader will say the same, the commentators will also say the same, unless and until, the commentator happens to be the French one or knows French language. Similarly, “there are many words and expressions that are used in English as they are,

while we know their meanings and their applications in the language, we are not aware about their correct pronunciation. “

Then, “I would reiterate the point that learning French will enrich your English Language at subconscious level and you are not aware about that at all, like it happened with me.”” Sometime people would ask me whether I have been trained on the accent as far as English is concerned.” While,” I would just remark, it is because of French, that all this enrichment in my communication and personality has happened. Do not you want to be like that?” This connect with the audience so remarkably, that 80-90 percent of students would opt for French language, while very few for German. The author won't criticise German, he would only reflect the positive points of both the languages, while my colleague would highlight German more, and as per information received from other students, she would also make students go negative by reflecting that French was very difficult and all. While, he would impress upon the students, that it is the other way around. As German is like English, one needs to utter every word like in Hindi, English, but over a period of time German words would have letters without vowels, sometimes 3-4 consonants will be there without a vowel, whereas in French, there is a split /a balance among letters in a particular word, 2/3 consonants, and then vowel, as a result, the pronunciation goes with a proper flow, while in German language, it is straight, this was the result of his own experience, while doing his PhD in French, and doing further research work, the author found out that in fact, that was the reality. French is the most flexible, followed by Italian, Spanish and German, and French is the most rhythmic language in the world owing to the pronunciation only, it is totally connected with the sounds, and one has to learn the rules and apply them at the first instance while learning. Hence it can be stated that French is initially difficult from pronunciation angle, but gradually the learner would find easy, once he grasps the rules, and applies them, and he is not dependent on his teacher to read new words, whereas in German, as the language progresses, it becomes difficult, while in case of French, as it progresses, it becomes easier.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The most important aspect of the success of French language department has been the special workshops that the author would conduct for those students who were keen to crack DELF examination. It is a natural aspect that when we see something beneficial other than that what we are getting, one really tries one's best for its achievement. The similar thing happened when the special classes were given to interested students to pass DELF examination. While they were not charged extra fee for this specialized training, they were required to register themselves for this international level examination. Most importantly, it was the confidence, motivation and spirit of action that was imbibed in students, as it was pitched as a value addition for the students, since they were only required to put in some extra hours of classroom learning and self-study. And, most importantly, they were convinced that they had nothing to lose, in case they won't pass DELF. The fact that they would be writing their DELF exam was in itself a reward as they were venturing out of their comfort zone, while their counterparts at Alliance Francaise would have studied for more than One year, while they had studied for practically 40 hours. Moreover, attending the special workshops of DELF preparation would simultaneously enhance their French skills as their classmates who were not attending these workshops, as they were studying the Language as being the part of their degree programme. They were inspired for being the initiators. All these developed their leadership skills. Most importantly, since in most of the classes, French was not the main subject, the author would further motivate them, that was the all the more reason to study, to study while enjoying as the marks they would score in the French exam won't be included in their aggregate marks, and they won't have any pressure on them.

Then, it happened such like that that the author became very well accepted as a French language teacher, not only because of his teaching style, but most important factors being his modesty, humility, passion for the subject and his keen interest in developing his students, as he would feel that he was doing a noble cause, as nothing had changed during those times, as far as academic execution, attitude of teachers by and large, and students' mind set were

concerned. There was a big shift, a paradigm shift with the author's way of connecting with the students that had been so rare in the life of students, from the perspective of teacher's nature, teaching style, and development of each and every students. The author would give chance to each and every student in the class to speak and participate in the teaching and learning process. His style of teaching was in sync with Knowle's model of cooperative and collaborative form of teaching and learning process. It happened that one is so involved in his work that practice, persistence, patience, positivity would give new insights to the tasks one is doing. And, secondly, the theorists or the researchers who have developed a particular model/technique has observed and discovered patterns, in this case, teaching and learning, and depending upon the merits they gather information, data, go for research, and then develop a particular model that can then be learnt and applied. In the author's case, it has always been the other way round. He was already applying the cooperative and collaborative forms of teaching and learning that he later on discovered that he has been following the same model, i.e., is termed likewise, i.e. cooperative and collaborative form developed by Knowles.

The remarkable thing that started happening had been that the students started taking interest in foreign language classes, and they would remark that they had been coming to institute to attend French classes only. The French classes became so popular that they overtook the management classes both in terms of Attendance, students' interests and level of participation. The author was offering a 3 in 1 formula, i.e. Learn French, and develop your personality and soft skills, and most important factor had been it was according to the philosophy "What students wanted to learn rather than what he as a teacher wanted to teach."

Clubbing the above points, simultaneity is the key area that managers of the prevalent Global context needs to accept and practice. They have to be ready for any exigency, plans could go haywire, and simultaneous action is important taking into consideration the uncertainty of businesses. This type of teaching and learning prepares the students well, as there is no plan, and the author would give an activity without prior information, but, while the

class would begin. There is always an element of surprise and variance that students don't know, and then, there are to interact with each other to solve the problem as given by the teacher. Spontaneity is the buzzword and one develops one's penchant of "GO WITH THE FLOW"

Positive interdependence implies that the students are preparing for the task give beforehand, and then they are also encouraged to solve it with proper discussions among them. They are solving along with other, as a result of which their problem and others' are also solved. Their problem solving, critical thinking, analytical abilities are also sharpened.

Individual accountability is also helpful in this type of teaching. Since the task might be given to each student, or a group of 2/3/4 depending upon the number of students, still, each individual is responsible for his particular task, and each member of the group solves his particular problem within the framework of the group tasks, and accordingly they would present the solution. This increases the group's cohesion, and dynamics.

Working in teams is an essential prerequisite in Corporates. Having observed students come out of the school, and then passing their UG level of degree, the author observed very well that students are totally engrossed in the marks, grades and other academic elements. Although they are important but not everything. Taking the background of his student life also, and depending upon the prevalent scenario, there has been a competitive spirit among students, and it was experienced that the group size of students during their first semester would be bigger that would lessen as and when students would progress to next semesters, till they reach to their final semester, and the group size would be reduced to 2/3. In the beginning, it would have been 5/8/. The reason behind that would be the competitiveness that they are accustomed to, primarily due to the teachers, who would impress upon the importance of coming First, second and excel in academics. However it is appreciable that a student would obtain First position and tops the college/ University, but, what after that, is s/he able to perform in teams? This is the big question. While the education system encourages them to be ahead of others, the Professional

ecosystem is designed such that everyone has to perform in teams, and individual performances are also appraised as per group's performance.

Therefore this CL comes as a breather for the average and above average level students.

Collective processing during the cooperative form of learning is that the entire class is indulged in the problem solving activity, here problem refers to the task or project that has been given to the students. Although in groups, but still, when some commonalities are derived, it would always be observed that there would be some intersection points, i.e. some common points that all the groups would be connected to. This is a key indicator of having understood the taught concept to the students. While the other points that would emerge of the learning process would be the indicators of "out of the box thinking", or development of students and achievement of LOs, i.e., learning Objectives.

Equal participation signifies that no student is left behind. According to this characteristic of CL, each student has the probability to be a part of the learning process, the onus is on him to initiate and participate. Then it was also emphasised to develop individual accountability. The students were given opportunities to present a topic so that they could enhance their presentation skills, as Business communication was the part of their subjects 'list, and they would apply what they were learning, while at their sub-conscious level of mind, they were also developing their soft skills quotient. Secondly implementing the Cooperative learning methodology, it was also important that students would relate to each other hence when students would present the topic, their peer groups would connect with them as well. Second part of applying CL related to the evaluation part. The students would evaluate the students. This meant that they were to judge their friend on the basis of the parameters of grammar, spoken French, their writing skills developed and others. This is similar to the primary class level of teaching and learning, where the kids were asked to check/correct each other's copies of subjects. These activities help students develop, and reiterate their learning in a subject like French, in which there are rule related to grammar, expressions, phrases and others that require repetition. Moreover, when they check each other's

work, they also develop confidence, and they enjoy learning, that becomes monotonous over a period of time. These sort of CL implementation activities are important to retain the interest of students in learning a foreign language like French, regarding which there exist misconceptions that that being a difficult language, which is not a correct statement. Moreover, the evaluation activity helps develop their decision and judgement making skills as well.

Be action oriented : This is a very pertinent factor in author's French language teaching initiatives, and this is what he always stresses upon that whether a student feels comfortable or not, encouraging, motivating and inspiring him to take action. Sometime we plan, plan and only plan. It is mandatory to put plan in action, and then plan, i.e. improvise on that. This was the result of his own life, when he would plan a lot but could not act upon those ideas. Hence, he would always encourage students to "Go for it", the famous tag line of NIKE brand of sportswear. Here action meant taking initiative whether individually or in groups to explain the topic/concept to the entire class, if s/he would have understood. Later on inviting students to explain the topic/concept that was a new one, so that, a basic framework is laid out, on which, then, the author would develop the concept further.

Group processing: This implantation tool of CL means that the author would explain what he was doing? Why was he doing? How was he doing? What are there the benefits/goals/objectives? After every class the author would take a feedback from the students about the feelings they would have had related to the learning outcomes. This feedback served as a FEEDFORWARD. It was something like that he was like a navigator of the learning bus of French, and students were the drivers, he would ensure that they drive the learning bus, and reach the ultimate destination, i.e. the goal and objectives of learning French language. The goals were based on the goals and objectives for the D.o.f.l., I.E., DEPARTMENT OF Foreign Languages.

The most important objective achieved from Cooperative form of learning has been that the students developed Interpersonal skills, and intra-personal skills to a great extent, as the feedback

received from the students themselves while studying their programme, and later on as and when they meet the author, that the classes provided them a wonderful platform to develop their overall personality.

VII. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would extend his sincere gratitude to Bharati Vidyapeeth Deemed to be University, and its constituent unit at New Delhi, the Directors, where he is serving at present,. The institute always extended the opportunity to show case his talent, be it were French language, international relations, teaching strategic management, marketing management, and contributing in various ways through his competencies.

REFERENCES

- [1] Cohen, E.G. (1998). 1. Making cooperative learning equitable.2.Educational leadership, 56, 18-22.Johnson, M.W. & Johnson R.T. (1999). 3. Learning Together and Alone: Cooperative, Competitive and Individualistic learning (5thEd.) Boston: Allyn and Beacon.4. leadwithlanguages.org/why-learn-languages/top-ten-reasons-to-learn-languages/. 5. www.ciep.fr