

THE APPROACH TO LEARNING FRENCH AS A THIRD LANGUAGE IN MALAYSIA THROUGH THE AUDITORY LEARNING METHOD

Farah Farhana Awang¹

ABSTRACT

Auditory learning is a language learning method that emphasises listening skills to acquire language proficiency. This library research aims to explore the use of auditory learning methods for French as a third language in Malaysia. This research examines the benefits and challenges of using auditory learning for French language acquisition in the Malaysian context through a review of peer-reviewed articles, books, and other sources. The results suggest that auditory learning can be an effective method for language learning, providing learners with opportunities to develop their listening and speaking skills and gain exposure to authentic French content. However, the research also highlights some of the challenges of using auditory learning, including the need for learners to access high-quality audio resources, the potential for miscommunication due to different dialects and accents, and the limited opportunities for interaction and feedback. Therefore, this research provides valuable insights into the use of auditory learning for French as a third language in Malaysia and suggests avenues for future research to develop effective language learning strategies in the Malaysian context further.

Keywords: Auditory, Auditory Learning, Education, French Language, Foreign Language, French Language Learner, Teaching and Learning

Introduction

Learning does not only occur within the educational system; it starts way before one enters school and persists long after graduating. It also takes place in various forms and environments alongside formal education. Each person has a different learning style that will aid their concentration, memorisation and understanding of their learning material. According to Balasubramanian & Anuncia (2018), Learning Style Detection (LSD) has grown in popularity in any academic system's adaptive learning environment. The approaches of the learning environments that are currently used feature facilities like managing content and learner data analysis. However, these solutions do not fully handle learning style recognition based on student capacity, evaluation based on cognitive competence, and knowledge growth.

A suitable learning style will tremendously help improve their learning and productivity efficiency. The optimal way for students to acquire knowledge is by recognising the significance and relevance of the information being taught in the classroom. If the students lack interest in the subject matter, they are unlikely to absorb it effectively. Even though we employ all our senses to perceive information, every individual prefers the most effective learning style. To ensure that all students can learn, it is essential to cater to as many of these preferences as

¹ Farah Farhana Awang, Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia, farhana@upnm.edu.my

feasible (Cuaresma, 2008). According to Dunn & Dunn (1978), only students can identify their preferred learning style. However, they can score higher on tests and have better attitudes if taught in more relatable and suitable ways.

There are many distinct learning styles, and based on their personalities, learning environments, and personal experiences, different people may favour different ways. However, studies have shown that choosing and using a good learning style may increase productivity and learning effectiveness. Learning style is defined in several ways. Mackeracher (2004) defined it as the characteristic cognitive, social and physiological behaviours that are stable indicators of how learners interact, perceive and respond to the learning environment. Brown (2000) defined learning style as how a person perceives and processes information in a learning environment.

Learning a foreign language has become a priority for many individuals and nations worldwide due to globalisation and the need for communication with people from different countries. According to The Star (2019), many Malaysians are learning French in schools and universities, and French language courses have gained popularity in academic institutions. However, studies indicate that learning French as a foreign language can be challenging. The number of students learning French in Malaysia has increased, whereby 28,000 students have registered to learn French since 1998 (Point, Ng, & Ting, 2021). French and other foreign languages, such as English, Mandarin, and Japanese, have become important languages of study in Malaysia (Bodian, 2017).

The popularity of French language courses in Malaysia can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, French is considered a global language that is spoken by more than 300 million people worldwide. Secondly, French is an official language in 29 countries, including France, Canada, Switzerland, and several African countries. Thirdly, learning French can enhance career prospects, especially in hospitality, tourism, and international relations (Study Section, 2020). Despite the popularity of French language courses in Malaysia, learning French as a foreign language can be tough. Studies have indicated that Malaysian learning the French language face several barriers, including the complexity of the French language, lack of exposure to French speakers and culture, and limited learning resources.

The complexity of the French language is one of the main issues Malaysian learners face. French grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation can be difficult for learners unfamiliar with the language's intricacies. Another challenge Malaysian learners face is the lack of exposure to French speakers and culture. Unlike English, which is widely spoken in Malaysia, French is not a common language, and there are few opportunities for learners to practice their French with native speakers. Learners of foreign languages often encounter frustration, stress, and confusion when attempting to learn and communicate in the target language, as noted by Pawapatcharandom (2007).

However, the research on students' French language learning experiences is limited, with most foreign language learning studies focusing on English and emphasising grammar over language skills. Due to this, to provide insight into the difficulties associated with learning a foreign language, this review examines some research findings related to English language acquisition as a foreign language. In Pawapatcharandom's (2007) study, Thai learners of English reported that writing was the most challenging skill to acquire. The lack of using the French Language in Nigeria contributed to the difficulty in learning the language. It is reasonable that French is not highly valued and lacks support in Nigeria due to the dominance

of English in nearly all areas, particularly in government functions. This is due to Nigeria's historical, multi-ethnic, and cultural nature, as Ayeomoni (2012) notes.

The difficulties of learning a foreign language ranked by language learners from hardest to easiest are as follows: listening, grammar, speaking, writing, pronunciation, and reading. In order to identify the causes of ineffective language learning, it is crucial to explore language learner challenges in areas beyond grammar acquisition. Throughout this research, there will be a discussion about the definition of learning style, specifically on auditory learning, the benefit and challenges of using auditory learning for French as a third language among Malaysian learners, a peer paper review with selected previous research about auditory learning style application on foreign language, and the importance of auditory learning style for non-native speakers.

Research objectives

The main objective of this research is to discuss the challenges for Malaysian students learning French as their third language and identify the benefit of auditory learning style in learning the French language, as well as challenges in auditory learning style for a French language course.

Methodology

The study used academic search engines like Google Scholar, JSTOR, and ProQuest to find relevant peer-reviewed papers, books, and other materials on auditory learning for French, basic learning styles, and problems in learning foreign languages. After identifying relevant papers, books, and other sources, all essential material is collected to fulfil the research objectives. Findings are gathered from reviewing papers on subjects related to the foreign language learner, French language learning, difficulties associated with French language learning, and learning methods such as auditory, kinaesthetic, reading and writing and visual. More details regarding auditory learning methods, including the benefit discovered through research, are also discussed. Because research on Malaysians learning French is sparse, the researcher examined the research discussion from other nations' origins, such as South Africa, China, and Turkey, when it comes to learning a third language using auditory learning. Findings from research publications on learning a foreign language, such as English, Chinese, and Turkish, were also included in the study since they had more evidence connected to learning techniques than the French language.

Findings

Challenges for Malaysian Students to Learn French as Their Third Language

There are several challenges for Malaysians or non-native French speakers to learn French as their third language.

One of them is motivationally driven. Students who are motivated to learn French as their third language (L3) tend to have better learning outcomes in comparison to those who learn it as a compulsory class to take in order to pass their degree. Motivation can be influenced by personal interest, perceived utility, and classroom environment. Tar (2011) discovers that learning French as a foreign language in Odo, Nigeria, at the secondary school level was impeded by the absence of opportunities for students to engage in conversation with others using the target language. Murphy and Shirin (2003) said that students with prior proficiency in their first

language (L1) and second language (L2) might encounter favourable or unfavourable effects while learning French as their L3. Favourable effects manifest as positive transfer, whereby learners can apply their existing language skills to acquire French more efficiently. However, negative transfer arises when learners apply the grammar or vocabulary of their L1 or L2 in learning French, which results in mistakes.

According to Huang, T (2020), students with higher levels of proficiency in their L2 tend to exhibit superior aptitude in acquiring French as their L3. This is because such students have already cultivated language learning skills and tactics that they can employ to facilitate the acquisition of French. As Lyster (2012) suggests, the teaching method's effectiveness may depend on the students' prior language learning experiences. Some research suggests that immersion programmes, which immerse students in a real and realistic French language environment, may be more advantageous for learners with advanced proficiency in L2. Conversely, detailed instruction may be more beneficial for learners with lower proficiency in L2.

Studies by Salomé & Commissaire (2022) argue that students might face challenges in mastering French vocabulary as their L3. Research has shown that teaching strategies like incorporating cognates (words that have similar forms in different languages), linking new vocabulary to existing knowledge, and offering repeated exposure to vocabulary may assist students in acquiring French vocabulary with greater success. According to Unal (2022), conventional techniques for teaching foreign languages are insufficient to meet the requirements of learners. Nowadays, it is crucial to integrate language instruction with cultural aspects, emphasising the need for a combined approach to foreign language learning.

Primary Learning Styles

Fleming and Mills (1992) discover four unique learning styles: visual learners, auditory learners, reading and writing and kinesthetic learners. Visual learning involves perceiving information through visual aids such as images, diagrams, and videos. This learner may prefer taking notes and use colour coding to help organise information, as visual learners require visual images to learn. Therefore, they rely on the teacher's nonverbal cues, such as body language, to help them understand the information better. More often than not, they prefer sitting in the front of the classroom as they can see more and prefer taking descriptive notes over the material being presented (Ldprice, n.d).

Auditory learning involves receiving information through hearing and sound. This learner may prefer to listen to lectures, podcasts, or audio recordings and participate in discussions and debates. Auditory learners utilise listening skills and interpret information by pitch, emphasis and speed. (Ldpride, n.d.) Pitch, tone, and volume are significant auditory aspects for the students to learn a new language. Even though auditory learners acquire knowledge effectively by speaking loudly in the classroom, they may struggle to comprehend information based on writing.

Then, some prefer learning through reading and completing written projects, such as taking notes. Kinesthetic learners like to learn using touch and senses, and it involves learning through physical activities and hands-on experiences. This learner may benefit from actively learning and working with tangible objects. However, they have difficulty staying focused (Ldpride, n.d).

Such shows that different people have various learning preferences and styles. People may increase their productivity and learning efficiency by determining and using an

appropriate learning style. Junco and Cotten (2012) find that students who were trained to identify their learning styles and given appropriate resources and materials based on their learning style had higher academic achievement, more motivation, and better time management skills than those who were not trained. Therefore, choosing and implementing the right learning style may dramatically improve productivity and learning outcomes. To maximise learning results, educators and students should work to determine their preferred learning styles and apply the right instructional strategies and materials.

The basic learning styles discussed intertwine with each other to strengthen the learning capabilities of a learner effectively. This is to aid learning within the school, outside, and throughout a person's life. The learning styles influence a person's progress in mastering the language. In a standard university course, it is uncommon to encounter all learning styles integrated into a single class. Though daunting, it is achievable through careful planning and preparation. This requires us to rethink the class structure, prioritising the diverse ways students learn. By utilising the numerous learning style inventories available, teachers and lecturers can gain insight into areas that require further development and those already well-established (Cuaresma, 2008). According to Aksoy's (2015) research data, 83% of learners learn through vision, 11% from hearing, 3.5% from the smell, 1.5% from touching, and 1% from the tasting. One of the most crucial challenges in acquiring relevant learning skills is how learners must learn to take accountability for their learning. Learners should be aware of their learning styles, recognise the traits associated with each style, and adapt their behaviour accordingly to support their learning style. Every learning opportunity presents a possibility for growth and development for the learner. It is up to the individual to explore different methods and enhance their learning styles to some degree (Coffield, 2004).

Auditory Learning in Learning Foreign Languages

Having proficient listening skills is crucial for students' academic success during their school years and for preparing college students for their future careers. Although not all individuals possess strong listening skills, language learners can improve their listening ability through targeted instruction within the classroom setting. Those with an auditory learning style can acquire this skill as a useful tool throughout their lifetime. From the time they are in the womb, children start to hear sounds and continue to listen to their surroundings after they are born in order to learn how to communicate (Tompkins, 1998: 260. Adapted from Akyol, 2010).

Celcia-Murcia (2001) define learning style as a general approach, such as analytic, auditory or visual, that students use that are vital in order to learn a new language. Learning foreign languages such as French has benefitted one's communication skills. However, most non-natives will find it difficult to learn the language compared to the native who has grown up with French as their main language.

Language learning strategies are techniques or steps learners take to enhance their acquisition, comprehension, and retention of linguistic and contextual knowledge. One such strategy is the listening strategy, as Chamot (2005) describe. According to Kayalar & Kayalar (2017), a significant amount of time during language courses is devoted to auditory learning, which relies on the ability of students' brains to receive and process auditory signals from instructors and classmates. Osada (2004) suggests that listening is not a vital skill for instructors or lecturers to teach and that students primarily acquire basic listening skills rather than comprehensive listening abilities. Consequently, listening remains the least prioritised area in language teaching (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016).

Tabanlıoğlu (2003) suggests that auditory learners process information through their sense of hearing and often benefit from hearing it repeatedly. An auditory learner may also be better at recognising patterns and associations between words and concepts than kinetic and visual learners. Auditory learners typically prefer instructional approaches such as lectures, seminars, dialogues, and audio recordings. When using audio recordings, learners are more inclined to ask questions on topics they are learning about and eager to express their confusion or lack of understanding.

Advantages of Auditory Learning

According to Kanar (1995), auditory learners typically enjoy listening and speaking, possess compatible personality traits, and face challenges following written instructions. Auditory learners have a reputation for being exceptional listeners. They possess the ability to understand concepts by listening carefully to instructions or lectures, repeating them or following them step-by-step. They can solve problems through verbal communication, processing and clarifying incoming information through active listening and repeating aloud. Additionally, they have a knack for telling humorous anecdotes and relaying stories effectively. They rely heavily on their listening skills to achieve higher learning success rates.

Based on Tabanlıoğlu's (2003) research results, auditory learners are proficient at efficiently manipulating and mastering the target language. According to Krashen (1985), language learners acquire language best when they are exposed to language input via auditory means that are slightly above their current level of proficiency. Kayalar & Kayalar (2017) mentioned how auditory learners do an excellent job recalling whatever they listen to when learning via auditory representation. Listening is one method to obtain information and enhance it. According to Fatt (2000), learners who prefer auditory learning tend to favour audio formats because it allows them to control how much information they read or listen to. Azhari et al. (2020) mention that individuals with effective listening skills or auditory learners tend to perform better in oral exams. Creating videos and conversing with their teachers or instructors can benefit such learners.

Mazı's (2008) research reveals that the students in the experimental group who participated in thinking activities through stories significantly improved their listening and reading comprehension skills, as evidenced by the significant difference between their pre-test and post-test scores. Shuting Li (2021) states that out of the various Chinese language courses offered for non-native speakers, the oral course is considered the most adaptable and closely linked to the practical communicative proficiency of the language being learned.

Challenges in Auditory Learning for the French Language

Multiple research show that one of the most important reasons for student failure in learning is due to the lack of listening (Conaway, 1982, Doğanay and Türkoğlu, 2009, Yıldırım, 2016). While auditory learners enjoy class discussions, external noise can easily disrupt their focus and distract their attention. They are inclined to prioritise listening to lectures, taking notes, or reviewing printed materials. Some learners may prefer low-effort learning tactics, such as listening to lectures, which is seemingly less effective than active learning for understanding and learning (Reuell (2019).

Kayalar & Kayalar (2017) mention that children could not handle auditory information similarly to adults due to their underdeveloped auditory skills, which typically mature during

adulthood. Another challenge for auditory learning is when a learner is in an environment with inadequate acoustics in the classroom; it can be detrimental to the learner as it can impair their listening skills and hinder the development of their spoken language, reading, and writing abilities. This, in turn, can jeopardise their academic progress and achievements. In order to improve the efficiency of language learning in the classroom, each student is given access to sound enhancement technology, which enhances the acoustic quality and enables better auditory accessibility (Kayalar & Kayalar, 2017). Therefore, the input that students acquire through listening is vital for their language development (Yıldırım & Yıldırım, 2016). Kayalar (2017) also suggests that a lack of listening skills and an inability to engage in auditory learning methods are significant factors leading to poor academic performance and student failure. Dunn and Dunn (1993) suggest that students who struggle academically often have difficulties with auditory memory. Even if they are motivated to do well, their inability to retain information presented through listening, reading, or classroom discussions can lead to poor academic performance, especially in traditional classroom settings where lectures and teacher-led instruction are common.

Suggestion on How to Increase Efficiency in Auditory Learning

Cohen and Wolvin (2011) conduct a study highlighting the significance of story listening as a crucial element in auditory learning. The researchers find the value of storytelling for auditory learners, pointing out that it offers more than just entertainment and can aid the learners in comprehending themselves and the world around them. According to the study, storytelling is a critical aspect of communication, and individuals trained in story listening tend to be more mentally engaged. Although storytelling is essential, the authors further emphasised how important story listening is. This, in turn, can bring great potential for creating classroom education around the stories and improving students' listening and general understanding skills.

It is believed that providing training on listening strategies can assist learners in selecting and organising the most effective techniques to achieve their listening objectives and requirements. This can result in greater clarity in comprehension, as stated by Cohen (2011). Using stories and drama as tools for language instruction holds significant value in brain-based learning. The classroom approach centres around stories to enhance students' comprehension and listening abilities (Kayalar and Güler Arı, 2016). Based on research conducted by Kayalar & Kayalar (2017), a quiet environment in the classroom is essential for the success of auditory learners in the teaching process. By doing so, the teacher can optimise the learning experience for students who benefit from auditory stimuli, leading to improved academic outcomes.

Kayalar & Kayalar (2017) suggest that to enhance the learning experience, individuals can form workgroups or find co-workers to collaborate with, which can foster a positive learning environment. Learning materials can be transformed into songs or audio recordings. Using a recording device, learners can create their own voice recordings of the material, allowing them to listen and review the content later. Macmohan (2014) suggests that listening to French music and audiobooks can be another way to improve articulation in French that does not involve studying linguistic rules.

Foreign languages can also be learned by watching foreign films (Iskan, 2017). King (2002) suggests that movies provide an extensive range of educational opportunities for students and provide different content that aids their learning. Students can acquire new

vocabulary and phrases related to the target language while watching subtitled films. They can also improve their spoken language of various words by listening to the pronunciation.

Conclusion

Research indicates that teaching and learning French as a third language (L3) can be intricate. Teaching effectiveness may rely on various factors, including the students' previous language learning experiences, the instructional methodology used, and their level of motivation. By utilising auditory learning skills, it can be advantageous for learners who concentrate on listening and hearing French, as it can enhance pronunciation, comprehension, and overall proficiency in the language. Even though auditory learning can be an efficient approach for Malaysian learners to acquire French as a third language, it does come with certain obstacles, such as limited interaction, reliance on technology, and the absence of visual cues. Nonetheless, these challenges can be overcome by adopting a well-rounded approach that combines auditory learning with other learning techniques.

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