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The Evolution of French for Specific Purpose (Français sur objectif spécifique FOS) and the Diversity of FOS Learners

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Abstract

The diachronic research in the teachings of the French for Specific Purpose (FOS) remains little exploited. Yet it offers an angle of reflection which revealed extremely rich perspectives, it was not only related to the evolution of the FOS with the conjunctures of the global political and economic situation, but it also reflected the evolution of teaching mode transforming gradually from 'teacher-centred' to 'learner-centred'. The parameters used to categorise various French learners were examined and some difficulties in defining these learners were drawn out in the analysis. This research was searching a way to answer the question on how learning FOS evolved and it aimed to define useful pedagogical elements to guide the teaching of FOS.

Keywords: French for Specific Purpose, evolution, diversity of FOS learners, French teaching, French learning

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Introduction

The teaching of French to the ‘specific’ learners, a term used by Lehmann, had always concerned with these learners such as non-French soldiers, professionals, scientists, fellows, students and researchers (Lehmann, 1993). The issue of evolution is an old question. The denominations of French teaching were recognised constantly for examples: Military French, French in Special Usage, Scientific and Technical French, Instrumental French, Functional French, French for Specific Purpose, Professional French, French for Professional Purposes, French as a Professional Language, French for Academic Purpose. These specific learners had already existed in the context. Most of the terms involved did not appear without a reason, especially concerning with the specific learners who have ‘specific’ needs. Their appearance largely depended on the past circumstances at the time when the educators or teachers put forward certain teaching proposals to meet the needs of the specific learners. To understand the existence of the terms in this field, especially from an evolutionary point of view, by considering both denominations and methodological principles, we are going to review the history involved. We will therefore present an overview of the history and evolution of the teaching of French to the ‘specific’ learners in France and study the most recent French for Specific Purpose FOS. In addition, we will also have a closer look at the diversity of the FOS learners in terms of its needs, motivations, difficulties in FOS and the typology of teaching and learning of FOS. This study hopefully will serve as the foundation for the research of French teachings and French learning related issues. Moreover it will also allow us to define pedagogical elements that are useful in the preparation of a curriculum for students in French as a Foreign Language (FLE).

Brief history of FOS

The teaching of the FLE had experienced different stages of change throughout its history. These changes had a replicating effect to social, political, economic or other contexts which responded to crises, specific needs, economic or institutional interests in a given context and at a given time. These different stages of the evolution of pedagogy in FLE eventually gave birth to an appellation for French for Specific Purpose (FOS) where it also went through several developments throughout history, according to its denominations.

We will therefore display a historical overview of FOS based on the table developed by Carras, Tolas, Kohler and Szilagyi (2007) in Table 1. We will also lay out some comments mentioned by the pedagogic designers on the evolution of these denominations.

Table 1: Synthesis of evolution of FOS nominations according to Carras, Tolas, Kohler and Szilagyi (2007, p.17-18)

Period	Denomination	Learners	Methodological guidelines
1920s	Military French	Non-French soldiers	Direct method: - prohibit the use of a language other than French during apprenticeship - allow the use of gestures and mimics instead of translation
1960s	French in Special Use	Professional learners (Non-academic)	Focus on French in special domain Fundamental level, focus on the lexicon
1970s	Scientific and Technical French	Scientists	SGAV (la méthodologie Structuro-Globale Audio-Visuelle) Teaching model consists of 3 levels: N1: basic usage of French N2: scientific common core of VGOS N3:refinement in a given discipline, lexical storage (VGOM, VIEA, etc.)

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Period	Denomination	Learners	Methodological guidelines
	Functional French	Interns of French government	Functional and communicative approach Rejection of a long 3-step curriculum and determination of the content by lexical counting Threshold level : Taking the diversity of the learners and their needs into account Fixation of contents based on the objectives Identification of communication situations and speech acts
	Instrumental French (Latin America)	Students Researchers	French language acts as an access to the written scientific and technical documentations
1980s	Functional French	Professionals Students Researchers	Emergence of Pragmatic Linguistics. Communicative approach (Fixation of contents based on communication situations) Focus on the learners Emphasis on the use of authentic documents
Since 1990s	French for Specific Purpose	Professionals Students Researchers	Communicative approach Focus on the learners Reinforcement of linguistics Discourse analysis Task-based pedagogy (pedagogy of the task or project) Assessment of communicative competence
	Specialised French		French in a particular professional practice
	Professional French / Language of Professionals		

Table 1 summarized the history of the FOS which consisted of two main parts: the evolution of the FOS nomination from 1920s to 1980s and the evolution of FOS nomination from the 1990s to the present. In order to unfold the process of how FOS evolved, the investigations were made into two parts, firstly we analysed the changes involving FOS nomination from 1920 to 1989 , then the development of FOS from 1990 up to the present.

Changes in FOS nomination from the 1920s to the 1980s

Military French

The origin of the pedagogy of FOS dated back to the 1920s under the name of Military French where the first textbook of a specialized French appeared. The textbook was entitled *Provisional Regulation of 7 July for the teaching of French to the Native Armed Forces*¹.

The textbook was intended for non-French-speaking soldiers doing service in the French army. After First World War, France had decided to train its colonial soldiers, especially those in Africa. It was considered to be effective at the military. Its motive was to improve language skills among non-French soldiers. There were two pedagogic objectives in this context: firstly, to facilitate the communication between the non-French soldiers and their French superiors ; secondly, to allow these military intelligence with better language skills to contribute their services to the development of their country after their return. In order to teach Military French, the classes were arranged to be homogeneous in the learners' level and it was limited to 20 learners per class.

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The textbook focused primarily on the daily life in the skirmisher's barracks and it included words and phrases that were essential to native instructors. The learning content consisted of writing, reading, calculation and metric system, diets, etc. The instructors used a direct method in teaching: the trainer did not use local native language to teach, but he or she used gestures and mimics to deliver the teachings. At the beginning of each session, an interpreter had to explain the meaning of the gestures and facial expressions used by the instructors.

French in Special Use or Specialised Language

This appellation was popular during the period of 1963 to 1973. This denomination came up as the first attempt to respond coherently to the emergence of the diverse and massive French learners (Lehmann, 1993, p. 89). This teaching approach had generated the practice of the first structural-global audio-visual SGAV (la méthodologie Structuro-Globale Audio-Visuelle) method. It was based on the structural linguistics (basic French) and behaviourism theories adapted for specific learners (mainly stress on oral communication). It had level 1, level 2 improvement progression and conforming to a progression of FF1 and FF2. Specialised lexicons and the selected syntaxes were emphasised in the classroom teaching (Lehmann, 1993, p. 41). This evolution was widely recognised (Lehmann, 1993; Cuq and Gruca, 2002, p. 321-328) and it was part of the cognition of any student who trained in the FLE pedagogy which was distinguished from FOS. The French in Special Use had long been associating firstly with the development of academic language, then with specialised common core, and finally with specialised language.

Scientific and Technical French

Lehmann's Scientific and Technical French did not refer to any particular methodology but followed the traditional methodology instead (Lehmann, 1993, p. 41). Holtzer (2004, p. 15) recalled that in the late 1950s, in the context of defending France's economic interests and its geographical influence, especially in developing countries, such as the former French colonies, the political decision had decided to involve the teaching of French scientific and technical in the scientific fields. However, this political decision had been made without any linguistic involvement. It was not until 1960s that the policy makers finally realised the significance of this problem. Therefore more and more current French elements were added into the textbooks to deliver the specialised techniques.

Instrumental French

This nomination appeared at the beginning of 1970s. It was taught especially in South America. This approach rejected audio-visual (AV) methods which aimed at enabling foreign adults to learn French as quickly as possible in order to have an understanding of French texts specialised in a certain field. Instrumental French was taught neither from a cultural aspect nor a usual aspect, it simply emphasized the scientific and technical communication in the university environment (focus mainly on the understanding of the French text). The French language was taught as means to access scientific and technological information (Lehmann, 1993, p.41, p. 79).

Functional French

Functional French was launched by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the mid-seventies during economic crisis. French government planned to promote the Functional French among university elites and fellows in the non-French speaking countries. Actually, there was a difference between the 'fonction' in French and 'function'. The term 'function' was related to 'speech act' in English. However the expression could perhaps, under the influence of English, refer to the communicative approach which was emerging at that time. Functional French emerged because of the awareness of the limitations of AV methods. This approach was based on a proper pedagogy and methodology which was intended to solve the language learning problem.

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The educators or teachers who practice the approach of Functional French rejected the long heavy curricula and they were against the use of universalistic methods. Lehmann rejected a linear and rigid progression of the learning model (Lehmann, 1993, p. 41, p. 68-73, p. 97-98). Functional French emphasized the functional use of the language and the acquisition of linguistic competences was essential in the learning and teaching process.

It must be noted, however, on the other hand, that the teaching of FLE has been stimulated by Functional French, if we consider taking the diversity of the learners into account, including their needs and their objectives. This functional teaching method had made a favourable environment for the implementation of new techniques in the evaluation and testing. It also opened up the use of new tools in linguistic description and broke down the dominance of the 'methods' in traditional teaching.

Since 1980s, Functional French's education had gained importance in the teaching of French for specific learners. In another words, functional teachings had become a practical application in teaching French to professional or academic learners. This approach aimed to let the learners to acquire the required knowledge, skills and behaviours as quickly as possible in order to let the learners to be able to cope up with the situations in which they will encounter in certain occasions. The learners do not learn by analysing the grammar of a language but rather learning according to their needs and individual characteristics. The functional approach identified the needs and translated them into objectives, content, actions and programs (Richeterich, 1985).

Lehmann and Porquier (1981) also emphasized two other aspects, namely 'analysis of speech acts' and 'analysis of authentic discourse', including 'taking needs of learners into account' and 'prediction of communication situations'.

There were some criticisms concerning Functional French methodology for following a linear process opposed to the circular model of Lehmann and Porquier (1981). Despite of the criticisms, Functional French approach had made progress in making the needs of learners a priority. This had greatly encouraged the initiatives of the learners at the pedagogical level in the FOS approach as we have just explained earlier.

The evolution of FOS nomination from the 1990s to the present

French for Specific Purpose (FOS)

This appellation borrowed exactly from the nomination of English for Special Purpose or English for Specific Purposes ESP. It appeared in 1980s. It succeeded the concept of Functional French approach and it focused on attaining the objectives insisted by Functional French, however it stressed little on how to achieve them (Lehmann, 1993, p. 41). The FOS approach was directed by the analysis of the language needs of learners (see Threshold Level or 'Un niveau Seuil'), pragmatics (speech acts) and socio-constructivism. Its application was essentially based on notional-functional and communicative approaches. The learners of FOS were often professional or university students who wanted to take French courses to achieve professional or academic goals.

Contrary to the chronological order indicated in Table 1 (Carras et al., 2007), Mangiante and Parpette (2004) commented that the nomination of 'French in Special use' should be historically anterior to FOS. The term 'Communication for Specific Purpose' appeared in 1989. The difference between French in Special Use and FOS was "the first to design methods intended for specific learners studying French from a professional or academic perspective. [...] on the other hand, the term Specific Purpose in French has the advantage of covering all the situations, whether they are involved or not in a special use." (Mangiante and Parpette, 2004, p. 16).

Mangiante and Parpette (2004) suggested that FOS covered all situations while Damette (2007, p.7) stated that FOS was certainly more attractive because it centralised the 'learner' whereas French in Special Use covered only a small part of the learners in the teaching of French.

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Mangiante and Parpette (2004) argued that the logic of the professional formation differed between French in Special Use and FOS with respect to the 'learners'. The former focused on the 'offer' suggested by the teaching designers. In other words, the learners were not identified distinctively but they existed potentially in terms of discipline or professional branch, there was no real distinction in terms of professional (e.g. French Business, French Tourism, etc.). This conceptualization was based on the logic of 'supply' that anticipated the future and possible needs of learners, an idea shared equally by Carras et al. (2007). On the other hand, the latter, FOS was concerned with the 'demand' coming from the learners, according to Mangiante and Parpette (2004). "The term 'request' refers to the existence of a specific external need. There is a certain identified learner. Therefore it generates the training program. FOS covers those domains where an institution offers training to the potential learners. Thus, the French learning cited above in the health or business domain was clearly part of French for Specific Purpose (FOS)." (Mangiante and Parpette, 2004, p. 18-19)

Professional French (French for Professional Purpose or Professional French Language)

Mourlhon-Dallies (2008) added a new concept called 'French Professional' to FOS. It can be subdivided into two typological subsets according to the demands, namely 'Professional French' and 'French as a Professional Language (now known as Français Langue Professionnel, FLP)'. This concept was a clarification of FOS. It was not meant to be replacing or overturning those previous approaches, it merely emphasized that "Each approach has its legitimacy and only responds to the concerns of its own, in an extremely diverse learning field, in which the approaches were increasingly domain orientated. [...] depending on the fields and different countries, different current approaches could co-exist. Thus, for French as a Foreign Language in the 1990s, almost all practices prior to the FLP co-existed". (Mourlhon-Dallies, 2008, p. 15).

According to Mourlhon-Dallies (2008), FOS provides the education of a certain skill rather than the training of a certain skill. This is the main difference between FLP and FOS. In another word, learners in FOS don't simply obtain the knowledge provided at the end of the course, they know what kind of knowledge they should acquire and they also understand 'how' to acquire the required knowledge. In order to achieve that, the situations for communication and various kinds of discourse were invented. It will help the learners to confront the real situation or discourse later on in their work.

FLP is required to fit into the referential frameworks of language skills. It should be pointed out that FLP focuses not only on foreigners but also on those learners who mastered little or spoke poor French and especially on those who had desperate needs to use French in their work. This approach is based firmly on the operational approaches of the Common European Framework of Reference in Language. Mourlhon-Dallies (2008) commented on the definition of French as a Professional Language, FLP is an approach concerning the teaching of French for professional purposes. Its aim is to help learners to be able to practice their profession entirely in French. FLP training is suitable for the learners who work in a French speaking workplace and for the learners to practice their entire profession in French (professional practices, legal and institutional aspects, and exchange views with colleagues and with the upper management) even if part of the work activity had to be carried out in English occasionally or in other languages (for example with clients) (Mourlhon-Dallies, 2008, p. 72)

FLP exists mainly due to the economic needs. When there is a lack of labour, there is a high tendency of immigrant recruitment. Many companies hire immigrants to solve the labour shortage problem. FLP responds to the professional formation of the immigrants. This response is considered as the preliminary level of FLP objective. FLP approach involves verbal interactions at work and writing for all the procedures in communication and information. Therefore the learners considered FLP as a tool that would help them to find a job and also as an opportunity of getting a promotion within the company through FLP certificates.

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Since 2006, many language training institutes had been offering FLP courses and certifications. The certifications are issued by the CCIP (Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Paris) in France or abroad namely CFP 1 and CPF 2 (Certificate of Professional French 1 and 2). They also offer other specialised certifications in some professional domains, for instance Diploma of Medical French (DFM), Certificate of Secretary in French (CFS), Certificate of Tourism and Hospitality in French (CFTH) and Certificate of Law in French (CFJ) as well as Diplomas of Business French 1 and 2 (DFA 1 and 2) and Diploma of the French for Advanced Business (DAFA). The CCIP also proposes a program to develop the communicative skills of the learners of FLP which is based on six main areas. They are social and professional relations, professional environment, functions of the company, administrative tasks, telephone communication and written communication.

FLP also assembles well-qualified foreign students. The higher education establishments either in university or Grande École will help the foreign students to obtain medium qualification employments in France. These foreign students must acquire the required communicative skills in French to achieve this goal.

Besides FLP, the other typological subset of the French Professional was called Professional French. This concept of Professional French was proposed by Damette (2007). The appellation is a combination of a linguistic component and a special field. The specific learning objectives are directed towards a specific group of learners “[...] to take into account not only the specificity of the domain (specialised language) but also the specificity of the learners (training designed for specific learners; with reference to two groups of learners of juridical French: students (in the process of professionalization) and professionals of the field.”(Damette, 2007, p. 7-13)

According to Carras (2007), Professional French has a transversal perspective. It requires the mastery of teaching of French. The problem of the competence of French among teachers had yet to be overcome, but this may seem too demanding as FLE teachers could not have universal knowledge in all disciplines. From a pedagogical point of view, teachers should identify the similarities in the different specialised domains and its activities, and focus those similarities in certain situation or topics for example writing a report, conducting a telephone conversation, participating in a meeting ... (Damette, 2007, p. 19-20).

The number of learners of the FLP increased by 250% in 2005 (Mangiante, 2006). Despite of this expansion, FLP were still reorienting and adapting its objectives in order to better meet the needs of the professional world. It focused on a small and recent domain in certain language training centres. Currently there were hardly any teachers or educators who have a clear definition on FLP. Mourlhon-Dallies (2006, p. 30) however had a different point of view “The learners of FLP were required to practice their profession entirely in French. In this case, the framework for practicing the entire profession was in French (legal and institutional aspects, exchange views with the colleagues and the upper management, practice of the profession) even if some part of the work activity was carried out in English or other languages (with colleagues)”.

According Mourlhon-Dallies (2006), the learners of FOS and FLP can be compared in three criteria:

- Level of French: FLP is intended for the non-native learners (immigrants from French-speaking Africa or Maghreb) and natives (illiterate population). FOS is aimed at non-native French learners related to their professional context.
- The degree of professionalization: FLP is conducted to the heterogeneous learners including those who were either in an initial training, already trained or becoming real professionals. The learners of FOS are rather homogeneous. Most of them were well-qualified learners.

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- The process of training: FLP is directed towards heterogeneous learners who followed regular training courses for the continuation of education and some of them were either in the vocational integration or had never attended the vocational training before. The purpose of FOS learners is to attain a certain professional progress.

Besides FLP and FOS, there exists a recent concept on the way of construction in related domain, it is known as “French for Academic Purpose” (now known as Français sur Objectif Universitaire, FOU). This concept is connected with the enhancement of interuniversity exchange programs in which the French universities had invested. This interuniversity exchange programs had been intensified since 1990. Its vast geographical coverage and diversity had nourished and enriched the development of FOU. Moreover the various teaching approaches of French as a foreign language also contribute to a better understanding of FOU and its role in the teaching or learning of FLE for academic purposes.

Analysing from a practical perspective in higher education, FOU consists of two approaches. First, there are similarities between FOU and FLE in terms of learning activities. In the universities that conduct FLE, communicative activities and techniques that theoretically originated from FOU were also included in FLE. Thus FOU and FLE practices interpenetrated each other despite of the suggestion from the existing theories. Second, the changes of concept, structure and methodology are found in FOU. This creates a reference domain for FOU so that its concept can be circulated widely.

The concept of FOU focuses on the acquisition and development of discursive skills such as academic discourse (e.g. lectures), the production of different academic writings (e.g. manual works, scientific article) and including production skills, speech, dissertation, report, memoir, etc.

On the other hand, FOU also focuses on the teaching and learning of formal oral and written communication, such as taking notes, reading notes, resume, summaries, presentations, etc. Stoean (2011, p. 195) stressed that the pedagogy of FOU is important for learners because “the development of transversal skills which involved the mastery of reception, understanding and production of academic genres are essential for academic success”.

Therefore the learners of FOU seeks to learn the abilities “to be able to read and listen to research discourses which are in oral and written form besides understanding academic speeches, performing academic ‘duties’ by following academic standards” as their learning objectives.

The making of FOS

The history of French as a Foreign Language with the ‘specific’ learners in France dated back to the 1920s. This special form of education had begun in the military field and since then it continued to develop under various influences that are both economic in terms of oil and fiscal restraint and political in terms of the change of governments.

The evolution of FOS started in the methodological level. These innovations in FOS methodology had co-existed with certain traditional practices found in linguistic or cultural teaching. Thus FOS had several appellations. Each one of them left its mark in the evolutionary history of FOS at a certain time and in a certain place. In spite of numerous changing appellation and transformations, FOS still develops and evolves continuously in order to better adapt the specifications of the target contexts.

Diversity of FOS learners

The learners had diverse characters. They have their own needs for language and cultural competence in knowledge, skill and behaviour. Their needs drive them to find their goal. They often had limited time to reach their objectives and generally they had varying levels of French. These various characteristics were found among FOS learners, they had been the study object of

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the researchers (Lehmann, 1993; Challe, 2002; Cuq and Gruca, 2002; Mangiante and Parpette, 2004; Carras et al., 2007).

In fact, regardless of the diversity of learning interests, the attention or dissatisfaction of decision-makers, the response or lack of response of the educators, these learners have a common characteristic. Lehmann had already pointed it out in 1980. He stated that although FOS approaches had been evolving, the same type of learners could still be identified. The examples in the past didn't stay the same nowadays, there might be specific depending on the case, but the characteristic of FOS learners is common. It was observed by recent researchers as Mangiante and Parpette (2004, p. 6) pointed out that "These learners as a whole, adult, professional or academic, with or without training, has learning objectives that must be achieved within a limited period of time rarely exceeding a few months."

Several general parameters

The journey of evolution construed the diversity of the learners. It obviously influenced the choice of the parameters for the categorization. Going through the period of history, the learners were defined and categorized according to the 'decision makers (décideurs)ⁱⁱ'. By taking a book or a textbook entitled 'A Threshold Level (Un niveau Seuil)' commissioned by the Council of Europe on a Living Languages project in 1971ⁱⁱⁱ as an example, it included a demand of defining the typology of these learners with their specific and functional communication. The authors of the mentioned book classified them into three subgroups:

- those who travel abroad for professional reasons and those who are required to have regular exchanges in a country and with partners who speak other languages;
- students or long-term trainees who come to live in a foreign country for studies, work and research;
- specialists or professionals who stay in their country of origin.

In another study, from 1989 to 1990, concerning the identification of FOS teaching operations handled by French cultural services abroad, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs signified three types of learners:

-The 'Students': the demand came from institutions mainly in Latin America (129 operations out of a total of 312 operations). These students followed specialized French courses in a university or in specialized institutes or schools.

-The 'Professionals': the request came from governmental agencies or private organizations. They request an education in the field of their professional activities because they have contacts with France or French people. Out of a total of 222 transactions (state and private demands), demand comes from Europe 35% (76 operations), 21% from Asia (47 operations) and 15% from the Middle East (33 operations).

-The 'Composite public': their needs were various and not homogeneous because they were adults, professionals, individual learners seeking courses to continue their education, they were often self-financed.

We found that the above classifications were no longer seemed appropriate to represent the real situation of the learners as they were not entirely linked to the government and to the public authorities under the condition of the socio-political contexts. This classification was only linked to the successive methodological currents in the teachings of the FLE. We shall now present a chronological presentation of the categorization problem for the diverse FOS learners and discuss some of the parameters proposed by some specialists who studied in this issue as examples.

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Diversity of FOS learners according to Lehmann (1993)

The categorization of FOS learners was considered quite difficult. In order to deal with this problem, these FOS learners could usually be narrowed down to two categories, namely the 'learners in active life' and the 'students'. The former needed French for their profession and for their career whereas the latter needed the French for science (in a broad sense). But this dichotomy would become rather misleading because in reality there existed more than two categories that were unable to be categorised according to the main axes of the categorization.

Lehmann (1993, p. 42-46, p. 55) suggested that the categorization of the learners could be done by recognising them as specific learners. Lehmann (1993) demonstrated that there was no clear cut boundary between these learners because several types of learners sometimes had overlapping characteristics.

If some learners are considered as the first type of learners, the 'active learner', then there will be a problem when we encounter the following professional situations:

- provide training courses of commercial negotiation in French for executives from various countries arriving in France by the request from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Paris, CCIP in short
- work in French concerning all French technical documentation necessary for the management of spare parts, maintenance and repair of vehicles in a French car company
- organize language training in French to train officials in international relations at the request of the Hungarian government
- facilitate the integration of construction workers and migrant workers in France through language training in French

On the other hand, if some learners are considered as the second type of learners, the 'students', then problems will arise when we come across the following professional situations:

- integrate 75 hours of French lessons as a method to reach the purpose of perfecting the expression of communication in media languages for a journalism curriculum in Togo
- organize an optional university course for students of the Department of Economics and Social Sciences by Alliance Française de Guadalajara.
- provide advanced French training for medical students in oenology by a university in Bordeaux
- organize a language course for tourist guides by École du Grand Louvre
- provide French courses for the future fellows of French government in Thailand

The dichotomous division shown above couldn't solve the categorization problem due to the 'active learner' sometimes intermingled with the 'students' or vice versa, it is difficult to differentiate them.

In the previous paragraph, several general parameters, the Council of Europe categorised the target learners into three subgroups. The French cultural services abroad under the direction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs classified the learners in a different way, the 'Students', the 'Professionals', the 'Composite public'.

We shared Lehmann's view (1993) that we should focus on the 'main axes of categorization' of the target learners. To demonstrate this, we will use the summarized table of Lehmann (1993, p. 47-48) in Table 2 to define a target learner who are Chinese-speaking students enrolled in a French university.

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Table 2: Key target audience grouping axes

The learners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - academic or professional? - voluntary or captive ? - homogeneous or heterogeneous? (level of mother tongue, level of target language, field of practice, learning habits and methods, duration of learning, language objectives that should be achieved)
What is the nature of the field of practice?
<p>Is the intended target language sought:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - very good or good enough or not specific? - homogeneous or diversified in terms of language competence?
<p>Is the realization of the investment: :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - immediate, circumscribed, precise and required? - delayed, diffuse and random ?
<p>Is the formation stage considered as a whole or isolated?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - before or after explicitly identifiable?
<p>What is the location of learning?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in French-speaking countries or areas? - concerning with the training institution?
<p>What is the nature of the resources available for teaching staff :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - general and specific expertise, availability, adaptability, capability in the habit of working in a team, possibility or need for additional or specific training (linked or not to the operation?)
<p>What is the nature of the material means?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in premises? - in "tools for the class" (textbooks and books): are they available? can we get them? are they developed? adapt them from existing tools? - technological means (especially for the production and reproduction of sound, image, written text): are they available? can we get them? how to ensure its conservation and maintenance?

The diversity of the learners had shown us that we should have the awareness of understanding the interest of the learners and then reflect them on the parameters in order to define the needs of these FOS learners.

Diversity of FOS learners according to Carras et al. (2007)

Carras et al. (2007) had also studied the diversity of learners, their study entitled ‘French for Specific Purpose and Language Classes’ had distinguished them to three types, namely the professional learners, the learners from the academic world, the learners in the medical field and the health professions.

The professional learners were divided into two subgroups whereas the academic learners into five subgroups according to the domains of the individuals.

The first group, ‘professional learners’, should be professionals in certain workplaces, the profiles of individuals were extremely varied but territorially they can be classified into two categories:

- Those who worked in their country of origin, for example: tourism and hospitality professionals receiving French tourists, French merchants with French buyers, French companies recruiting local staffs to work on the place ... etc.
- Those who worked in the host country (France or French-speaking countries), for example: foreign managers transferred within their branch agencies or companies, various sectors in France in shortage of manpower recruiting foreign personnel.

The second group, ‘learners from the academic world’ in a broad sense, consists of five main types:

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- Foreign students who study in France;
- There are two types of university exchange programs: either university courses receive foreign students in exchange for a specific duration according to the interuniversity exchange program or in an exchange program framework where the university ‘passing the order’ to set up a training in French specifically aimed at integration (in general it is carried out in a University Centre for French Studies);
- International scientific cooperation programs welcoming foreign researchers to France;
- French and bilingual universities that open courses according to the specialised field in French in their own countries like the case in Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia.
- Students with scholarship who come from different countries and must attend their studies or part of their studies in France.

The third group, ‘learners in the medical and health professions’, concerns the recruitment of foreign health personnel, for example nurses, doctors, FFI (acting as Interns). The request comes on the spot (in France) or abroad. In France, the application could be foreign interns or foreign medical students for a certain training period. If it is abroad, the request could be a cooperation project between two countries and French physicians are sent to provide both theory and practice to foreign students abroad

As we have seen, the examples of applications that Carras et al. (2007) had enumerated in their study illustrate that the variety was extreme. It was important to note that, when we face such diverse learners, their needs and demands will affect all - or almost all - areas of specialty and jobs, the categorization remains difficult. It is difficult to distinguish each group of learners.

Conclusion

We have just reviewed the different designations or conceptualizations that the teaching or learning of FLE for specific purposes had begun from the 1920s to the present. Whatever the diversity of FOS learners and the classifications proposed by the researchers during these various periods, it was necessary to be aware of the obvious difficulties of classification emphasized many times by Lehmann (1993). The weaknesses of the classification parameters concerned overlaps between clusters. Lehmann (1993) therefore considers that it was important to bear in mind that the main axes and the continuums to be regulated differently for different cognitive operations.

In conclusion, regardless of the domain in education, science, economics or other exchanges between the French and the rest of the world, the learners are considered as incapable of mastering French if they haven’t had an accurate proficiency of French in a specialised area. The teachers and educators should play an important role in helping the learners to master the target language. In this context, we imagine that one travels between two languages and two different cultures, the teaching of FOS could be comparable to a ‘ferry’ that passes between two shores. Therefore, by studying the origin and the evolution of FOS, the teachers or educators who teach French as a second language will enable to design their training programs more accurately and more effectively.

ⁱ Commission militaire (1927). Provisional Regulations of July 7, 1926, for the teaching of French to the Armed Forces, Charles-Lavauzelle et Cie, Éditeurs militaires, Paris, Limoges, Nancy.

ⁱⁱ The term "decision-makers (décideurs)" in this context was defined as decision-makers of political leaders or leaders of the current education department.

ⁱⁱⁱ This project was led by Council of Europe. Recommandation R(82)18 aux Etats membres concernant les résultats du Projet No 4 du CDCC (Langues vivantes 1971-1981)
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