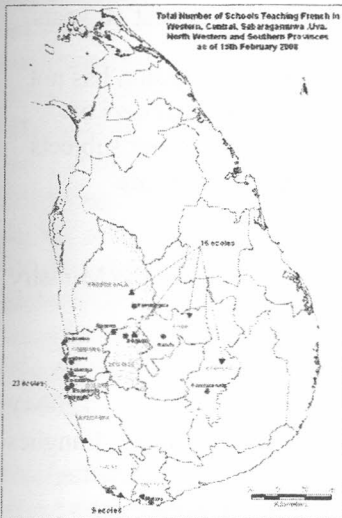


# TEACHING FRENCH AT THE SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL IN THE STATE SCHOOLS IN SRI LANKA: 30 YEARS AFTER. A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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## Introduction



**Fig. 1. Map of areas where schools teach French**

French occupies the status of a foreign Language in Sri Lanka and has been taught in the Secondary school system for over 30 years. A majority of the schools that pioneered the teaching of French initiated classes for the Advanced Level and prepared students for the Advanced Level Examination at the end of two years of study. Today however, the majority of secondary schools which teach French offer classes for both the Ordinary Level and the Advanced Level.

The objectives of this paper are twofold: trace the different stages of development in the field of teaching

methodology in French as a Foreign Language and secondly, and in comparison to this development, to make a critical analysis of the methodology adopted for teaching French in the State Schools in Sri Lanka with the objective of answering to the question: “ does French teaching at the Secondary School level respond to the aims and objectives of today’s learners?”

Today, teaching French as a Foreign Language adopts a communicative approach to respond to the needs and aspirations of present day learners of French who formulate the need to sharpen their skills in spoken French. Teaching manuals emphasize on the “communicative approach” and propose a multitude of different activities for the classroom.

Within this global framework of development in the field of teaching French as a Foreign Language, where does teaching French at the Secondary School level in the State Schools stand today?

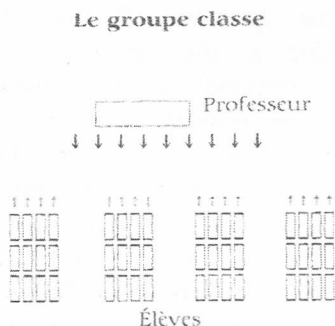
## Methodology

Our research was conducted in 24 State Schools teaching French at the Secondary School Level and 522 students participated in it. Data was collected through a questionnaire distributed amongst these students. We also distributed a ‘Pedagogical Questionnaire’ amongst 33 teachers

of French with the intention of knowing the teaching methodologies used by them in teaching French.

### Results

Analysis of data obtained through questionnaires shows that there has been no significant change during the past 30 years in the methodology adopted for teaching French in the Secondary School system. We still use a traditional method of teaching French where the teacher is the focal point and the written language is given importance. Spoken French is absent.



**Fig. 2. The group class**

However, the analysis of answers given by students shows that the majority of them study French to be able to communicate in this language and have a professional objective in mind: to find a job because of their knowledge of the language and secondly, to be able to travel outside Sri Lanka.

### Conclusions

It is therefore likely that French teaching in Sri Lanka does not respond to the needs of today's learners. There is certainly a marked disparity between the needs formulated and the results obtained. Our research shows that many factors

influence the present status of teaching French in Sri Lanka. For the purpose of this paper we would call the reader's attention to the following:

- there has been no revision of syllabi for French during the past twelve years,
- the G.C.E Ordinary Level and Advanced Level Examinations have had no change in the past 10 years,
- the Ministry of Education has not invested in training teachers of French compared to other subjects where regular trainings are organized for teachers,
- the *status* of French in the Ministry of Education.

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