

THE EFFORTS OF TEACHERS IN MAINTAINING THE FRENCH LANGUAGE IN HIGH SCHOOLS

Muhammad Angga Misbakhussiyah, Mohamad Syaefudin.

Faculty of Languages and Arts

Semarang State University

Semarang, Indonesia

manggamisbakhoessiyah@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aims to find out (1) the efforts made by teachers in maintaining French language at school, (2) steps or strategies taken by teachers to improve French language learning at school. This research is a descriptive research. The population of this study is French teachers in secondary schools both public and private in Central Java. The sampling technique used was quota area random sampling. By using this technique, 28 samples of French teachers in various schools in Central Java were obtained. The instrument used to obtain data was a questionnaire. The data that has been obtained is analyzed using descriptive percentage analysis as well as qualitative. The results of this study show that (1) the efforts of teachers in order to maintain the French language in schools are maximized. Teachers try to be active in professional organizations, include students in competitions, and create activities that demonstrate French language and culture skills; (2) the improvement of French learning is done through upgrading pedagogical, professional and social skills, making several innovations and creating learning projects that attract students' interest. These efforts are believed to support the sustainability of French teaching so that French still exists and is in demand in schools.

Keywords – efforts, teachers, French

Introduction

Foreign languages have a very significant role in modern life today. In the era of rapid globalization, foreign language proficiency is not only a valuable asset but also an urgent necessity. Foreign languages open a window to a wider world, allowing individuals to communicate across cultural and geographical boundaries, as well as broaden their horizons and understanding of different traditions and ways of life. Therefore, many Indonesians learn foreign languages to broaden their horizons or for other reasons (Saragih, 2022). In addition, mastering a foreign language can enhance career opportunities, facilitate access to information and knowledge, and enrich personal experiences. Along with the times, nowadays foreign language learning is no longer elitist. Everyone can easily learn it (Santoso, 2014).

In the context of education, business, diplomacy, and tourism, foreign language proficiency is often a key factor that determines the success and effectiveness of interactions between nations. Therefore, foreign language learning is an important investment for individuals and communities in facing the challenges and opportunities in this increasingly connected world.

Foreign language education in Indonesia has an important position that is recognized and reinforced by law. According to Article 43 of Law No. 24/2009 on the Flag, Language, and State Emblem, as well as the National Anthem, the government has the authority to support Indonesian citizens who wish to develop foreign language skills to improve the nation's competitiveness. This rule is also reinforced by Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia No. 57/2014 on the

Development, Guidance, and Protection of Language and Literature, specifically articles 7 and 16. Article 7 emphasizes that foreign languages in Indonesia have a role as a means of international communication, supporting the mastery of science, technology, and art, as well as being a source of Indonesian language development. Currently, many books, technologies, and even works of art are developed using foreign languages. Therefore, it is important for the government to encourage foreign language education as a means to master technology and art, as well as a way to enrich the Indonesian language.

In the era of globalization and multiculturalism, the ability to speak foreign languages, including French, is a significant plus for the younger generation. A deeper understanding of teachers' efforts to maintain French in schools is not only beneficial for curriculum and education policy development, but also for preserving cultural heritage and strengthening international relations. Therefore, this paper has high relevance in both academic and practical contexts.

Foreign language education is needed so that students can participate and adapt in facing the era of globalization in the world, so that in facing the era of globalization every country in the world has foreign language education policies in their respective countries, especially in formal education (Hasdiana, 2018). Some people know the importance of mastering foreign languages, but the awareness to know and learn them is very lacking and does not always go right. Moreover, in the era of globalization, it is certainly very important for the next generation of the nation to study and deepen all knowledge, especially in foreign languages (Hifasoh et al., 2023).

French is a foreign language that has a long history and great influence in the fields of culture, art, diplomacy and science.

However, in recent decades, the role and existence of French in the education curriculum in various countries, including Indonesia, has experienced significant challenges. This is due to several factors, including changes in education policy, the increasing dominance of English as a global language, and technological advances that facilitate access to various other languages.

In Indonesia, French is taught in some schools as a second or third foreign language. However, it often loses its popularity compared to English or other foreign languages such as Mandarin and Japanese which are considered more acceptable and more usable. This condition requires special attention, especially from French teachers who have a great responsibility in maintaining students' interest in French language and culture.

Since the implementation of the 2013 curriculum, French education in Indonesia has experienced a paradigm shift. French (as well as other foreign languages) is no longer an (important) foreign language taught, but only a specialization subject (which in most schools chooses non-foreign language subjects as specialization subjects) (Rohali, 2020). In learning a foreign language, especially French, of course there must also be mandatory elements in the teaching and learning process. One of the elements needed is a teaching approach or method, which is how to teach a foreign language to learners, so that the teaching objectives can be achieved with good results (Rahayu, 2019).

French teachers in Indonesian schools play an important role in maintaining the sustainability of learning this language. Teachers as one of the determining factors for the success of learning who have direct involvement both emotionally and in thought with students must continue to make updates that are adapted to the times in teaching students to learn comfortably and enjoyably

(Kaka et al., 2021). They not only act as teachers, but also as cultural custodians and motivators who strive to create an interesting and relevant learning environment for students. Teachers have the right to choose which learning methods, media, or tools to apply in their classroom and it all depends on the actual needs and urgency in the classroom (Oleh et al., 2023). However, teachers often face various challenges in carrying out their duties. These challenges include limited supportive educational resources, lack of up-to-date teaching materials, as well as students' low motivation to learn French and students' perception that they prefer other languages.

The students seem less enthusiastic in learning French. This is because French is only a specialization subject. In addition, French is often considered difficult to learn, so there are still many students who cannot pronounce French properly and correctly, do not use French to ask or answer questions from the teacher and still have difficulty writing good and correct French sentences (Mukaromah, 2021). The ability of students to manage is one of the levels of learning effectiveness in schools that greatly influences and creates a comfortable learning environment for students, teachers must be able to make what is taught easily understood and absorbed by students (c. flores, 2019).

The lack of innovation is due to the lack of attention from the French and Indonesian governments to the development of teaching and learning materials and facilities (Masyarakat, 2018). In such a situation, creativity and innovation from teachers are key in maintaining the sustainability of French language learning.

The variations made by teachers in the learning process are expected to overcome boredom and boredom experienced by students. In addition to overcoming boredom in students, the use of variations in teaching

will increase the attention of students, foster positive behavior of students towards learning, and provide opportunities for students to learn according to their level of development and ability (Rahmat & Jannatin, 2018). An educator must also be able to make himself a professional educator who can realize a similar learning process so that it can encourage students to learn actively and be motivated in their learning (Delvia et al., 2021).

The purpose of this study is to find out 1) teachers' efforts in maintaining French language in high schools in Central Java and (2) steps or strategies taken by teachers in improving French language learning in high schools in Central Java.

Explore and analyze the various efforts made by teachers in maintaining and improving French language learning at school. Teacher efforts are efforts made by a teacher to solve problems encountered during the learning process (Amrillah, 2021). By examining the strategies and approaches implemented by teachers, this study is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the best practices that can be adopted as well as the challenges that need to be overcome.

Methodology

This research uses descriptive qualitative research methods. Descriptive qualitative analysis is a data analysis method used to describe and summarize qualitative data, namely data that cannot be measured numerically or in the form of text, images, or sounds (Nugraha & Hidayat, 2023). This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore in depth the experiences, strategies, and efforts made by French teachers in maintaining and improving French language learning at school. The variables of this study are: (1) efforts made by teachers in maintaining

French at school, (2) steps or strategies taken by teachers to improve the quality of French learning at school.

The population of this study is several high school teachers in Central Java who offer French language programs. The research sample consisted of 28 French teachers in various public and private high schools in Central Java. The selection of participants was done by *quota area random sampling* to ensure that participants have experience and knowledge relevant to the research topic.

To obtain data in this study, an instrument in the form of a questionnaire containing questions via google form was used to obtain rich and in-depth data on the strategies and efforts made by teachers in maintaining and improving the quality of French language learning at school.

Table 1. Questionnaire Instrument

Questionnaire Instrument			
No	Variable	Sub Variable	Item
1	Teachers' efforts to maintain French at school	Threat or decline due to dominance or use of other foreign languages	1
		Understand the specific types or forms of threats perceived by teachers	2
		Evaluation of school leaders' views on French language learning	3
		Identification of concrete	

		measures to ensure French has a strong and valued position in the curriculum	4
		Recognize collaboration with other teachers and school staff to strengthen French language learning at school	5
		Knowing students are encouraged and given opportunities to participate in French language competitions	6
		Find out about teachers' initiatives to promote French language and culture through various activities or events at school.	7
		Find out about teachers' efforts to enrich students' learning experience by presenting native French speakers, either live or online	8

		Identification of additional steps taken by teachers to maintain the presence of French in the school	9
2	Teachers' steps to improve the quality of French language learning at school	Knowing the learning media used to increase the effectiveness of French language learning and attract student interest	10
		Views or suggestions from teachers on effective measures to improve French language learning	11
		Obstacles teachers face in their efforts to improve French language learning	12
		specific methods or strategies to increase students' interest in French language learning	13
		additional steps taken by organizing French	14

		extracurricular activities	
		teachers' strategies to increase students' interest in French	15
		upgrading teachers' pedagogical and social skills to improve French learning effectiveness	16
		a project-based learning approach to help students gain a deeper understanding of the French language	17
		additional measures to improve and support the sustainability of French language learning to keep students interested	18

The collected data is described in percentage and qualitative terms. The percentage formula used is

$$P = f/N \times 100\%$$

with the following explanation:

P: percentage number

f: the frequency for which the percentage is being sought

N: number of subjects / number of individuals

(Sudijono 2002: 40)

The formula was used to analyze questionnaire items no. 1 to no. 18, then described qualitatively.

Finding and Discussion

From the questionnaires sent to French teachers in high schools in Central Java, 28 French teachers responded. The following is a presentation of the results of data collection and discussion.

Efforts to Preserve French at School

Data on French language preservation efforts were collected through a questionnaire on items no. 1 to 9. From the analysis of the questionnaire of 28 respondents, the following can be described.

On questionnaire item no. 1 with the question: "Do you feel that French is threatened by other foreign languages?", was answered "always" by 13 (46.4%) respondents, "sometimes" by 14 (46.4%) respondents, "never" by 1 (3.6%) respondents, and "never" by 6 (21.4%) respondents. This shows that most of the respondents always feel that French is threatened by other foreign languages.

In questionnaire item no. 2 with the question: "What form of threat do you feel the most?", 11 (39.3%) respondents answered "closure of French lessons", 9 (32.1%) respondents answered "reduction of class hours", 6 (21.4%) respondents answered "change of subject taught", and 2 (7.1%) respondents answered "move to another school to keep teaching". This shows that most respondents felt threatened by the closure of French lessons at school.

On questionnaire item no. 3 with the question: "Do you think French at school gets

attention from the school leadership?", was answered "very good" by 8 (28.6%) respondents, "good" by 7 (25%) respondents, "average" by 11 (39.3%) respondents, and "poor" by 2 (2.1%). This shows that the majority of the respondents thought that French lessons received mediocre attention from school leaders.

In questionnaire item no. 4 with the question: "What are your efforts to ensure that French has a place in schools?", 7 (25%) respondents answered "by participating in professional improvement activities", 13 (46.4%) respondents answered "by joining professional organizations, such as MGMP", 4 (14.3%) respondents answered "by making personal approaches to leaders", 3 (10.7%) respondents answered "by promoting French on social media", and 1 (3.6%) respondent answered "never". From the data, it can be seen that most respondents think that trying to be active in professional organization activities such as MGMP is the most common form of effort taken to make French find a place in schools.

On questionnaire item no. 5 with the question: "Do you cooperate with other teachers to support French learning?", was answered "always" by 16 (57.1%) respondents, "sometimes" by 8 (28.6%) respondents, and "never" by 4 (14.3%) respondents. There were no respondents who thought "never". From this data, it can be seen that most respondents always cooperate with other teachers to support French learning at school.

On questionnaire item no. 6 with the question: "Do you include students in French competitions?", was answered "always" by 6 (21.4%) respondents, "sometimes" by 10 (35.7%) respondents, and "never" by 11 (39.3%) respondents, and "never" by 1 (3.6%). This shows that the majority of the respondents have included students in French

competitions to help improve students' interest and skills in the language.

On questionnaire item no. 7 with the question: "Do you ever organize activities that showcase French language and culture such as language days, cultural exhibitions, or student exchanges?", was answered "sometimes" by 7 (25%) respondents, "ever" by 11 (39.3%) respondents, and "never" by 10 (35.7%). From the data, it can be seen that most respondents have organized special activities or events at school that showcase their abilities or promote French language and culture.

In questionnaire item no. 8 with the question: "Do you bring in French speakers in classroom learning both offline and online?", was answered "always" by 1 (3.6%) respondent, "sometimes" by 2 (7.1%) respondents, "never" by 10 (35.7%) respondents, and "never" by 15 (53.6%) respondents. This shows that most respondents have never brought French speakers in the classroom either offline or online to enrich students' learning experience.

On questionnaire item no. 9 with the question: "What other steps do you think should be taken to improve and support the sustainability of French language learning in schools so that it remains attractive to students", various answers were obtained with classifications including; 1) Interesting teaching (using fun and interesting learning methods, focusing on French speaking practice to build students' confidence). 2) Involvement in school activities (participating in MGMP activities and seminars to improve teaching skills, playing an active role in school management and school development teams to introduce French more widely). 3) Cooperation and efforts to bring in foreign speakers (trying to bring in foreign French speakers to the school, complaining about difficulties in

bringing in foreign speakers to the Provincial Education Office, communicating with organizations such as AFS and IFI for cooperation in improving French learning). 4) Self-development (attending various offline and online training to improve teaching skills as well as being active in school development teams and participating in teacher professional programs). 5) Promotion and learning of French (promoting French to make it more attractive to students, organizing French learning programs outside class hours, including students in French competitions).

Teachers' Strategies in Improving the Quality of French Learning at School

The data on the strategies to improve the quality of French learning carried out by teachers were collected through a questionnaire on items no. 10 to 18. From the analysis of the questionnaire of 28 respondents, the following can be described. On questionnaire item no. 10 with the question: "Do you use interesting actual learning media in teaching?", was answered "always" by 12 (42.9%) respondents, "sometimes" by 12 (42.9%) respondents, and "ever" by 4 (14.3%) respondents. This shows that almost half of the respondents always use interesting actual learning media, some sometimes use it, and the rest have used it.

On questionnaire item no. 11 with the question: "What do you think could be an effective strategy to improve French language learning at school?", 5 (17.9%) respondents answered "increasing the number of hours of French lessons", 11 (39.3%) respondents answered "linking French materials with current events", 8 (18.6%) respondents answered "organizing French cultural events regularly", and 4 (14.3%) respondents answered "adding extra activities such as French singing". From the data, it can be seen that most respondents

think that "linking French materials with current affairs" is the most effective strategy in improving French learning in schools.

On questionnaire item no. 12 with the question: "What obstacles do you experience in improving French language learning at school?", 6 (21.4%) respondents answered "students' lack of interest in French", "limited resources and facilities" by 7 (25%) respondents, "few French language learning resources" by 7 (25%) respondents, and "low level of support from students' parents" by 8 (28.6%) respondents. From this data, it can be seen that most respondents think that "low level of support from parents" is the most frequent obstacle experienced by teachers in improving school French learning.

On questionnaire item no. 13 with the question: "what methods do you use to increase students' interest in learning French at school?", 19 (67.9%) respondents answered "demonstration method", 8 (28.6%) respondents answered "direct method", and 1 (3.6%) respondent answered "indirect method". Meanwhile, there were no respondents who used the lecture method. This shows that most respondents use the demonstration method to increase students' interest in French learning.

On questionnaire item no. 14 with the question: "To increase students' interest do you organize extracurricular activities related to French?", was answered "always" by 4 (14.3%) respondents, "sometimes" by 4 (14.3%) respondents, "once done" by 7 (25%) respondents, and "never" by 13 (46.4%) respondents. Based on this data, it can be seen that most teachers never organize extracurricular activities related to French to increase students' interest.

On questionnaire item no. 15 with the question: "What strategies do you use to increase students' interest in French?", "content relevance" was answered by 4

(14.3%) respondents, "interactive activities" by 12 (42.9%) respondents, "use of technology" by 6 (21.4%), and "humanist approach to students" by 6 (21.4%) respondents. From the data, most respondents thought that the most frequently used strategy to increase students' interest in French was interactive activities.

On questionnaire item no. 16 with the question: "Do you upgrade your pedagogical and social skills to improve French learning at school?", was answered "always" by 10 (35.7%) respondents, "sometimes" by 16 (57.1%) respondents, and "never" by 2 (7.1%) respondents. Based on the data, it can be seen that most teachers sometimes upgrade their pedagogical and social skills to improve French language learning.

On questionnaire item no. 17 with the question: "Do you use a project-based learning approach to encourage students to gain a deeper understanding of the French language?", was answered "always" by 8 (26.8%) respondents, "sometimes" by 15 (53.6%) respondents, and "never" by 5 (17.9%) respondents. Meanwhile, no one answered "never". From these results, it can be seen that most respondents sometimes use a project-based approach to encourage students to gain a deeper understanding of the French language.

On questionnaire item no. 18 with the question: "What other steps do you think can be taken to improve and support the sustainability of French language learning at school so that it remains in demand by students?", various answers were obtained which were divided into; 1) Innovative learning approaches and methods (teachers use learning methods and strategies that suit the needs of students and always innovate in teaching, complete learning facilities and infrastructure are provided to support the teaching and learning process, learning is made comfortable and fun, with a humanist

approach and relevant according to the times). 2) Increased student interest and motivation (French is introduced to new students through interesting activities such as singing or watching French movies together, student motivation is increased by showing good career opportunities for those who are proficient in French, student activities involve French along with other foreign languages to increase student interest). 3) Participation and collaboration with other teachers (approaches and collaborations are made with other teachers to strengthen French learning, the School ensures the availability of competent teachers to teach French, even when a teacher retires).

Conclusion

Based on the data analysis, two things can be concluded. *First*, French teachers in Central Java consider the existence of other foreign languages to be a threat to their existence. The biggest threat perceived is the possibility of closing French lessons. One of the main factors is that the attention from the school is considered ordinary. The efforts to maintain French in schools are in the form of (1) teachers' activeness in professional organizations; (2) cooperation with other teachers to support learning, (3) participation in French competitions; (4) activities to demonstrate French language and culture skills. The internal efforts are carried out through (5) interesting teaching efforts, (6) active participation in school management and school development teams to introduce French more widely, (7) cooperation with related parties to bring foreign speakers of French to the school, (8) self-development following various offline and online training to improve teaching skills, and (9) promotion of French to make it more attractive to students.

Second, to improve professionalism, teachers continue to improve the quality of French

learning at the School through the implementation of effective strategies through interesting and innovative actual learning methods, demonstration methods. They continue to connect French materials with the current situation, conduct interactive activities, upgrade pedagogical and social skills. In addition, another strategy that can be done is to increase students' interest and motivation by showing good career opportunities for students and organizing student activities involving French to increase students' interest, as well as participating and collaborating with other teachers to improve the quality and strengthen French learning in schools.

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