

French Language Teaching at Greek Academic Institutions

L'enseignement de la langue française au sein des institutions académiques Grecques

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Abstract

This study provides an in-depth examination of the historical evolution, institutional frameworks, pedagogical methodologies, and future perspectives of French language teaching in Greek academic institutions. The analysis situates French language instruction within Greece's broader sociopolitical, cultural and educational landscape, emphasizing the long-standing cultural ties between Greece and France (Mackridge, 2009) and the significant role of Francophone diplomacy and public policy. The paper draws upon foreign language education policies (Dendrinos, 2015), multilingualism research (Tsokolidou, 2014), applied linguistics (Lopez, 2016) and the pedagogical standards of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001, 2020) to assess the strengths and challenges of French language education today. The analysis includes an expanded discussion of student motivation, sociolinguistic attitudes, curriculum design, teacher training, and digital transformation. It also highlights emerging trends such as online learning, translation technology,

professional specialization (e.g., business French), and international mobility programs. This study concludes with evidence-based recommendations for revitalizing French language teaching in Greece and reinforcing its role in promoting multilingualism, cultural understanding, and international academic collaboration.

Keywords:

French language, Greek academic institutions, student-centered-approach, intercultural competence, formative student assessment.

Résumé

Cette étude propose un examen approfondi de l'évolution historique, des cadres institutionnels, des méthodologies pédagogiques et des perspectives d'avenir de l'enseignement de la langue française dans les institutions académiques grecques. L'analyse situe l'enseignement du français au sein du paysage sociopolitique, culturel et éducatif global de la Grèce, en mettant l'accent sur les liens culturels de longue date entre la Grèce et la France (Mackridge, 2009) ainsi que sur le rôle significatif de la diplomatie francophone et des politiques publiques. L'article s'appuie sur les politiques d'enseignement des langues étrangères (Dendrinos, 2015), la recherche sur le multilinguisme (Tsokalidou, 2014), la linguistique appliquée (Lopez, 2016), les normes pédagogiques du CECRL (Conseil de l'Europe, 2001, 2020) afin d'évaluer les atouts et les défis actuels de l'éducation en langue française. L'analyse comprend une discussion élargie sur la motivation des étudiants, les attitudes sociolinguistiques, la conception des programmes, la formation des enseignants et la transformation numérique. Elle met également en lumière les tendances émergentes telles que l'apprentissage en ligne, les technologies de traduction, la spécialisation professionnelle (par exemple, le français des

affaires) et les programmes de mobilité internationale. Cette étude se conclut par des recommandations fondées sur des données probantes visant à revitaliser l'enseignement du français en Grèce et à renforcer son rôle dans la promotion du multilinguisme, de la compréhension culturelle et de la collaboration académique internationale.

Mots-clés: Langue française; institutions académiques grecques; approche centrée sur l'étudiant; compétence interculturelle; évaluation formative des étudiants.

1. INTRODUCTION

Foreign language education plays a critical role in shaping cultural identity, academic growth, and professional development in Greece. Amid globalization and increasing European integration, Greek universities aim to prepare students for a multilingual world, guided by European policy frameworks that promote linguistic diversity (Council of Europe, 2020). Historically, French has held a privileged position in Greek education due to intellectual, diplomatic, and cultural ties (Mackridge, 2009). In the 20th century, French was widely regarded as the language of culture, philosophy, diplomacy, and elite education (Lazaridis, 2018), and it continues to carry symbolic prestige.

However, shifts in global linguistic hierarchies, particularly the growing dominance of English, have influenced student preferences (Dendrinis, 2015). Despite this, French language teaching remains essential within many Greek universities, supported by specialized departments, international collaborations, exchange programs, and cultural institutions. This paper provides a comprehensive overview of the status of French language teaching in Greek academia. It analyzes evolving trends, pedagogical approaches, institutional challenges, and future

prospects while integrating insights from multilingual education research, language policy, and applied linguistics.

2. Historical Background of French Language Teaching in Greece

2.1 Early Historical and Cultural Foundations

French influence on modern Greek culture can be traced back to the Enlightenment, when French intellectuals and political thinkers shaped the democratic and educational ideals of the emerging Greek state (Mackridge, 2009). French was associated with modernity, rationalism, and cosmopolitanism. Throughout the 19th century, Greek elites often studied in Paris, and French literary and philosophical texts were translated widely. This intellectual exchange laid the foundation for the institutional presence of French in Greek higher education. As a result, many of the earliest Greek universities integrated French literature, philology, and translation into their humanities curricula.

2.2 Institutionalization in the 20th Century

In the aftermath of World War II, France intensified cultural diplomacy in Greece, supporting French language education through scholarships, academic missions, and the expansion of the Institut Français de Grèce. The creation of dedicated French language and literature departments—including those at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and Aristotle University of Thessaloniki—established French as a cornerstone of modern humanities education (Lazaridis, 2018). The educational philosophy of the period emphasized textual analysis, literary studies, and classical philological methodologies. French was widely taught both as a foreign language and as a core component of teacher training programs.

2.3 Shifting Linguistic Landscapes in the 21st Century

The early 2000s brought significant changes. English became an indispensable tool for academic research, employment, and international communication (Dendrinos, 2015). Simultaneously, other languages, especially Spanish, German, and Italian, grew popular among Greek university students due to cultural trends, perceived ease, or economic factors (Tsokalidou, 2014). Despite these changes, French has maintained a strong symbolic and cultural value, reinforced by Erasmus+ exchanges and Franco-Hellenic partnerships (Lazaridis, 2018). The challenge today lies not in preserving French as a cultural language but in ensuring its continued relevance within an increasingly competitive educational landscape.

3. Institutional Framework of French Language Teaching in Greece

University Departments Specializing in French

Dedicated French language departments remain the backbone of French teaching in Greek higher education. These departments provide both linguistically specialized and interdisciplinary programs involving:

- French linguistics
- French and Francophone literature
- Teaching French as a foreign language (FLE)
- Translation theory and practice
- Intercultural communication

Their curricula are frequently updated to align with CEFR guidelines (Council of Europe, 2001) and emerging job-market needs.

Master's programs often focus on:

- Applied linguistics
- Translation studies
- Intercultural education
- Teaching methodologies

These programs produce language teachers, translators, interpreters, and cultural mediators (Lopez, 2016).

French is also offered as an elective or required foreign language course in:

- Tourism management programs
- International and European studies
- Business departments
- Engineering and architecture schools
- Fine arts and music studies

This broader integration reflects the importance of French in professional fields such as aviation, hospitality, EU institutions, and cultural diplomacy. The Institut Français de Grèce supports universities by offering teacher training, co-organizing academic conferences, promoting DELF/DALF certifications, supplying pedagogical material and facilitating university partnerships. Its involvement demonstrates the enduring impact of cultural diplomacy on educational policy (Institut Français de Grèce, 2020).

4. Pedagogical Approaches and Contemporary Methodologies

The teaching of French in Greek academic institutions has evolved considerably, reflecting both international pedagogical trends and the specific sociolinguistic context of Greece. With the global emphasis on multilingual

competence, French remains an important language in higher education, contributing to academic mobility, cultural exchange, and professional development. This unit examines traditional and modern pedagogical approaches, highlighting contemporary methodologies currently applied or recommended in Greek universities.

4. 1. Traditional Pedagogical Approaches

Historically, French language teaching in Greece relied heavily on grammar-translation methods and structuralist models. These approaches emphasized mastery of grammatical rules, translation exercises, and written accuracy. Although they contributed to a strong theoretical understanding of the language, they often lacked opportunities for authentic communication.

4.1.1 Grammar-Translation Method

The grammar-translation method was widely used in earlier decades, focusing on reading classical French texts, memorization of vocabulary, translation from Greek to French and vice versa. While this method ensured a rigorous linguistic foundation, it did not necessarily foster communicative competence.

4.1.2 Audio-Lingual Method

Gradually introduced in the mid-20th century, the audio-lingual method brought a greater emphasis on oral drills and repetition. This approach improved pronunciation and listening skills but still lacked spontaneity and real-life communication contexts.

4.2. Shift to Communicative Approaches

As European educational standards evolved, Greek academic institutions

began adopting communicative language teaching (CLT), which prioritizes meaningful interaction and practical language use.

4.2.1 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

CLT focuses on authentic communication tasks, pair and group work, task-based activities. emphasis on fluency over accuracy. In university settings, CLT allows students to apply French in academic and professional contexts, such as presentations and written assignments.

4.2.2 Task-Based Learning (TBL)

TBL encourages learning through tasks that replicate real-world scenarios. Examples include: preparing a report for an academic conference, conducting a mock interview in French, analyzing French media sources.

4.3. Contemporary Methodologies in Greek Academic Institutions

Today, French teaching in Greek universities integrates digital literacy, intercultural competence, and learner autonomy.

4.3.1 Blended Learning and Digital Tools

With the rise of e-learning, blended models combine face-to-face instruction with online activities. Tools commonly used include: learning management systems (LMS), online dictionaries and corpora, interactive exercises and video platforms. Digital environments allow learners to engage with contemporary Francophone media and develop self-paced learning strategies.

4.3.2 Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)

Modern curricula emphasize intercultural awareness through exposure to

French and Francophone cultures, comparative cultural analysis, critical reflection on stereotypes and cultural identity. ICC prepares students for international mobility programs such as Erasmus+.

4.3.3 Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

Some universities incorporate CLIL, teaching academic subjects (e.g., history, political science) in French. This approach promotes advanced language proficiency and academic literacy (Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010).

4.3.4 Cooperative Learning

Collaborative projects encourage teamwork and peer learning. Activities may include:

- Group presentations
- Joint research projects
- Peer feedback sessions

Despite significant progress, several challenges remain such as limited exposure to native speakers, uneven student proficiency levels, need for updated teaching materials. However, opportunities include increasing digital resources, international collaborations, and the global relevance of French.

To summarise, the pedagogical approaches and methodologies used in teaching French in Greek academic institutions continue to evolve in response to changing educational needs. From traditional grammar-based instruction to contemporary communicative and digital frameworks, teaching practices now aim to foster linguistic competence, intercultural understanding, and learner autonomy. These developments strengthen the role of French in Greek academia and contribute to producing globally engaged graduates.

5. Student Motivation, Attitudes, and Learning Outcomes

The examination of student motivation, attitudes, and learning outcomes holds a central position in contemporary educational research, as these variables profoundly influence academic performance, learner engagement, and the overall effectiveness of higher education systems. Within Greek academic institutions, these elements acquire particular importance due to ongoing efforts to align national educational standards with broader European frameworks while responding to evolving societal, economic, and technological demands. The present unit adopts an academic perspective to analyze the multidimensional nature of student motivation, explore the attitudinal factors shaping student engagement, and assess the determinants of learning outcomes in the context of Greek tertiary education.

5.1. Theoretical Perspectives on Student Motivation

Student motivation constitutes a complex construct informed by cognitive, behavioral, and sociocultural theories. It encompasses both the underlying reasons driving student behavior and the mechanisms that sustain academic effort.

5.1.1 Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation refers to engagement in learning activities driven by interest, intellectual curiosity, or personal satisfaction. In the context of Greek universities, intrinsic motivation is frequently observed when:

- Educational content aligns with student aspirations and academic identity.
- Learners perceive autonomy in the selection of study pathways or research topics.
- Pedagogical practices encourage creativity, critical inquiry, and self-

expression.

5.1.2 Extrinsic Motivation

Extrinsic motivation arises from external incentives or pressures, including grades, future employment opportunities, or social expectations. Greek students may be influenced by:

- Labour market competitiveness and the need for academic credentials.
- Familial encouragement or cultural emphasis on higher education.
- Institutional recognition, scholarships, and academic distinctions.

5.1.3 Contextual Factors Influencing Motivation

Motivation in Greek academic institutions is shaped by various environmental and systemic factors, such as:

- The pedagogical competence and communicative style of instructors.
- The accessibility and quality of institutional support services.
- Assessment practices emphasizing fairness, transparency, and formative feedback.
- Availability of digital tools, online platforms, and modern educational resources.

5.2. Student Attitudes Toward Learning and Academic Life

Student attitudes comprise cognitive beliefs, emotional dispositions, and evaluative judgments that influence academic behavior. These attitudes significantly affect persistence, engagement and the perceived relevance of learning.

5.2.1 Attitudes Toward Curriculum and Course Content

A positive orientation toward course content often emerges when students

recognize the relevance of academic material to professional goals or societal needs. Conversely, curricula heavily based on theoretical knowledge, with limited application-oriented learning, may contribute to disengagement or reduced motivation.

5.2.2 Attitudes Toward Teaching Staff

Instructor qualities play a decisive role in shaping student attitudes. Factors such as clarity of instruction, pedagogical consistency, intellectual stimulation, and empathetic communication contribute to the formation of positive attitudes. Negative perceptions may develop in response to unstructured teaching, limited feedback, or lack of accessibility.

5.2.3 Attitudes Toward Institutional Environment

The broader learning environment—including administrative efficiency, campus resources, and social climate—also influences student perceptions. A supportive and inclusive environment fosters belonging, reduces academic anxiety, and enhances engagement.

5.3. Learning Outcomes in Greek Higher Education

Learning outcomes represent the measurable knowledge, competencies, and skills students acquire as a result of their academic engagement. These outcomes are essential indicators for evaluating instructional quality and institutional performance.

5.3.1 Cognitive Outcomes

Cognitive learning outcomes in Greek academic institutions include:

- Mastery of disciplinary knowledge.
- Development of analytical, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.
- Ability to synthesize information from diverse sources.

5.3.2 Affective Outcomes

Affective outcomes relate to attitudes, values, and personal development, including:

- Strengthened academic confidence and self-efficacy.
- Increased intercultural and ethical awareness.
- Enhanced communication and interpersonal skills.

5.3.3 Behavioral and Professional Outcomes

These outcomes involve the practical application of knowledge and skills in real-world or professional contexts:

- Research competence and methodological literacy.
- Collaboration, teamwork, and project management abilities.
- Professional readiness and adaptability.

5.4. Interrelationships Among Motivation, Attitudes and Learning Outcomes

A substantial body of research affirms that motivation, attitudes, and learning outcomes are interdependent.

5.4.1 Motivation as a Predictor of Academic Achievement

Students with high levels of intrinsic or extrinsic motivation demonstrate greater persistence, increased participation, and more effective learning strategies, which collectively contribute to improved academic outcomes.

5.4.2 Attitudes as Mediating Constructs

Attitudes frequently mediate the relationship between instructional practices and student performance. For example, positive perceptions of teaching quality may enhance motivation, which in turn improves cognitive and behavioral outcomes.

5.4.3 Learning Outcomes as Measures of Institutional Effectiveness

The quality of learning outcomes serves as a metric for evaluating the efficacy of curricula, pedagogy, and institutional policies, thereby guiding reforms and strategic planning.

5.5. Challenges Impacting Student Success in Greek Universities

Greek academic institutions encounter several structural and contextual challenges that influence motivation and learning:

- Large cohort sizes limiting personalized instruction.
- Economic difficulties affecting student concentration and study continuity.
- Variability in digital and physical infrastructure across institutions.
- Limited counseling and academic advising services.

6. Recommendations and Strategic Interventions

6.1 Enhancing Student Motivation

- Adoption of student-centered and inquiry-based pedagogies.
- Integration of technology-enhanced learning and blended models.
- Providing opportunities for independent research and academic exploration.

6.2 Improving Student Attitudes

- Modernizing curricula to ensure relevance and practical applicability.
- Fostering transparent communication channels between faculty and

students.

- Promoting collaborative learning environments and peer-support systems.

6.3 Strengthening Learning Outcomes

- Clearly articulating learning objectives and aligning them with assessments.
- Expanding academic support services, such as tutoring, mentoring, and writing centers.
- Investing in continuous professional development for academic staff.

In conclusion, the dynamics of student motivation, attitudes and learning outcomes form a critical framework for understanding academic success within Greek higher education. By adopting pedagogical innovations, enhancing institutional support, and fostering a student-centered learning environment, Greek universities can significantly improve student engagement and educational effectiveness. As societal and technological transformations continue to shape higher education, sustained attention to these factors remains essential for advancing academic quality and promoting the holistic development of learners.

7. Best Practices and Innovative Approaches

The teaching of French in Greek academic institutions has undergone significant transformation in response to evolving linguistic needs, technological advancements, and European educational directives. This chapter examines best practices and innovative pedagogical approaches currently applied or recommended for French language instruction in Greek higher education. Emphasis is placed on communicative methodologies, digital integration, intercultural competence, and learner-centered strategies. The chapter also highlights challenges and proposes recommendations for sustained instructional improvement.

In recent decades, French language education in Greece has shifted from

traditional, teacher-centered frameworks to learner-centered, interactive, and technology-enhanced models. Greek academic institutions aim to align their language programs with European Higher Education Area guidelines while fostering multilingualism, academic mobility, and cultural literacy. Identifying and implementing best practices is therefore crucial for ensuring pedagogical effectiveness and enhancing student learning outcomes.

7.1. Pedagogical Best Practices in Teaching French

Effective French language instruction in Greek universities relies on established best practices rooted in educational research and applied linguistics.

7.1.1 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

CLT remains a cornerstone of modern language pedagogy. Its implementation in Greek institutions includes (Richards & Rodgers, 2014):

- Emphasis on authentic communication and meaningful interaction.
- Pair and group activities promoting negotiation of meaning.
- Use of real-life materials such as news articles, videos, and podcasts.

This approach enhances fluency, functional competence and learner engagement.

7.1.2 Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

TBLT encourages students to complete authentic tasks that mirror real-world communication. Examples include:

- Simulated professional scenarios.
- Collaborative projects, such as preparing a Francophone cultural presentation.
- Problem-solving activities conducted entirely in French.

TBLT strengthens both language proficiency and critical-thinking abilities.

7.1.3 Differentiated Instruction

Given the diverse linguistic backgrounds of students, differentiated instruction is essential. Best practices include:

- Adapting materials to varying proficiency levels.
- Providing multiple learning pathways.
- Offering optional enrichment activities for advanced learners.

7.1.4 Formative Assessment and Feedback

Continuous assessment supports learning progress. Effective strategies involve:

- Low-stakes quizzes.
- Reflective journals.
- Constructive, individualized feedback.

7.2. Innovative Approaches in French Language Teaching

Innovation plays a key role in modernizing language education, particularly in institutions aiming to meet international standards.

7.2.1 Integration of Digital Technologies

The use of digital tools has expanded significantly. Common innovations include:

- Learning Management Systems (LMS) for course delivery.
- Interactive applications for vocabulary and grammar practice.
- Virtual classrooms and online discussion forums.
- Digital storytelling and multimedia production.

These tools promote learner autonomy and digital literacy.

7.2.2 Blended Learning and Hybrid Models

Blended learning combines on-campus instruction with online components, offering flexibility and enhanced accessibility. Benefits include:

- Personalized learning paths.
- Increased exposure to authentic French content.
- Opportunities for synchronous and asynchronous communication.

7.2.3 Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

CLIL integrates subject-specific content with language instruction. In Greek academic settings, CLIL may involve teaching:

- European history.
- Political sciences.
- Cultural studies.

This method develops advanced academic language skills and deepens disciplinary understanding.

7.2.4 Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)

Modern language instruction emphasizes the development of intercultural awareness. Innovative practices include:

- Comparative cultural analysis.
- Virtual exchanges with Francophone students.
- Exploration of cultural artifacts such as films, literature, and music.

7.2.5 Project-Based Learning (PBL)

PBL encourages collaboration and creativity. Common examples include:

- Student-produced newsletters in French.
- Organization of Francophone cultural events.
- Research projects using French academic sources.

7.3. Challenges in Implementing Best Practices in Greek Institutions

Despite significant progress, several challenges affect the implementation of best practices:

- Limited availability of modern teaching materials in some departments.
- Varying student proficiency levels (Ellis, 2003).
- Uneven access to digital infrastructure.
- Large class sizes that reduce individualized instruction.

8. Conclusions and Recommendations for Enhancing French Language Teaching

To strengthen the quality of French language education in Greek universities, the following recommendations are proposed: Investment in digital infrastructure and training for instructor, curriculum modernization to include interdisciplinary and intercultural components, promotion of academic mobility programs such as Erasmus+, continuous professional development for language instructors, collaboration with French cultural institutions, including the Institut Français.

The teaching of French in Greek academic institutions is evolving toward more dynamic, technology-enhanced, and learner-centered models. By adopting best practices and embracing innovative methodologies, universities can significantly improve language proficiency, cultural competence and student engagement. Ongoing evaluation and adaptation will be essential for ensuring that French language programs remain relevant, competitive, and aligned with

international educational standards.

French language teaching in Greek academic institutions continues to evolve within a complex educational and sociolinguistic landscape. Despite challenges, French maintains cultural prestige and academic significance. Adopting innovative pedagogies, strengthening international collaborations, modernizing curricula and promoting multilingualism will ensure its continued relevance.

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