



Localization, a Suitable Approach to French Language Teaching in Educational System of Iran

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Abstract

In recent years, the development of sociolinguistics basis along with the effective role of contextual features in didactics, have led language teaching policy makers to “localization of language teaching” approach all over the world. The attempt to resolve the educational deficiencies and shortcomings in the current methods of language teaching such as ignoring the language learners’ needs and context, led to development of theoretical basis and practical strategies in localization. This research, following an intercultural approach, intends to study the localization concept in French language teaching in Iran and to suggest a theoretical and practical framework for localization of foreign language teaching according to social, cultural, educational and political contexts in our country. In this research we aim to answer the two following questions: what are the mechanism and necessities of French language teaching localization in Iran, and, how is teaching culture in existing French textbooks and how far is it applicable. The present research is applicatory in nature and in terms of methodology, it is descriptive analytics, answering the main questions by means of content qualitative evaluation techniques. Our findings confirm the fact that French teaching in Iran is applicable in three levels, macro (educational localization), medium (curriculum localization) and micro (manual localization). On the other hand, content analyses of seven French teaching textbooks reveal unequal and unbalanced application of national identity factors versus French culture factors, ignoring intercultural approaches.

Keywords: French Language Teaching, curriculum, localization, textbooks

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1. Introduction

The educational system, as a main pillar of the identity of countries, has a unique role in shaping national identity and keeping cultural values. In recent years, this issue has been considered by policy makers and those involved in education in our country, and they have struggled for a program-oriented policy for educational programs including foreign language education. The most recent of these efforts are the approval of the comprehensive scientific plan of the country (December 2010), the approval of the national education document (March 2010) and the compilation of the national curriculum (May 2010) (Kiabi et al., 2011, p. 188). Due to changes in the country's language policies and based on the approvals of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution and the High Council of Education (in 1993, 2002 and 2015) teaching five foreign languages (German, French, Russian, Italian and Spanish) along with English in schools were recognized on the basis of respect for students' right to choose, with the aim of breaking the monopoly and breaking the dominance of the English language. Based on the history of teaching and translating French in Iran (since the Safavid era) (Moallemi, 2018,) this language has a special position among Iranian language learners and its textbook is the first book compiled by the Ministry of Education among foreign languages Other than English. According to the mentioned cases, the aim of the present study, on the one hand, is to investigate the mechanism of localization of French language teaching in schools appropriate to the social, cultural and educational context of Iran through critical and pathological examination of the current situation at the macro level (policies), medium level (National Curriculum), and micro level (French language textbooks) and on the other hand, a critical and pathological look at the existing French language textbooks in terms of intercultural issues to analyze the existing books, appropriate solutions to achieve the desired status of French language teaching in Iranian schools should be offered in accordance with the context and needs of Iranian students. Therefore, this study seeks to answer two basic questions: one is the need for localization of French

language teaching in Iranian schools and in what stages and by what mechanism this process should be done and the other is how and to what extent cultural education in these books are included.

2. Methodology

In order to answer the main questions of this research, first of all, "localization criteria" should be determined, which unfortunately, so far, no written text or official research that can be cited in this field has been provided. Therefore, in order to achieve the objectives of the research, a researcher-made table that is appropriate to the socio-cultural context of society and its educational goals and oversees the intercultural aspects of books (other educational categories of books require independent research) has been prepared is: Dimensions of national identity, French culture, French language culture, intercultural knowledge, each of these 4 components will include subsections that have been carefully studied in 7 textbooks of French language education. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of national identity, there are different definitions and components of this concept and there is no theoretical unity in providing a single definition of it. Therefore, in a researchers' general views in this field, "Dimensions of Iranian National Identity" analytically includes seven dimensions of national, cultural, religious, political, ethnicities and subcultures and Iranian symbols, each of which from many perspectives in books were analyzed in French language courses in middle school, high school and pre-university. The next component in the textbook analysis table is "French culture", the components of which are taken from the CEFRL text. According to this document, French culture is divided into two parts: Public culture and socio-cultural knowledge. The next criterion for the localization of textbooks is the "components of French-language culture". French Language area is a group of countries where French is spoken as a mother tongue, second language or foreign language. Most of these speakers live in Europe, Canada, Africa, and parts of the Middle East, and will naturally have cultural differences or

commonalities. The final criterion is the localization of "intercultural knowledge", which in the CEFRL region; this important category includes four main components: communication between culture and foreign culture, communication with people from other cultures, acting as a cultural mediator between one's own culture and culture External and stepping beyond the necessary artificial stereotyped relationships (ibid, 2001, p. 84). In this study, these 4 main criteria of localization have been examined in 7 textbooks of French language teaching in middle, high school and pre-university levels.

3.Results

The results of this study can be summarized as follows: In order to answer the first question of research on the need to localize French language teaching in Iranian schools, it can be stated that based on the analysis of the content of the National Curriculum Document and the Fundamental Transformation Document of Education, attention to context components (social, political, cultural and educational) Emphasis on strengthening the components of Iranian culture and national identity, paying attention to the needs of Iranian language learners and their related components in the educational process, as well as the legal prohibition of using imported public textbooks in education in the country, "Localization of foreign language teaching" For example, it makes the French language a necessity in education. It should be mentioned that the steps and mechanism of localization of French language teaching in Iranian schools are classified into three levels: macro level (educational localization), medium level (curriculum localization) and micro level (textbook localization), the actions of which were described in detail. In order to answer the second question of this research, a researcher-made table of localization criteria in the field of culture education (components of national identity, French culture, French language and intercultural culture) was presented, which was the basis for content analysis of 7 French language textbooks. According to these analyzes, 208 cases of using national identity components (79 cases in middle school - 129 cases in high school and pre-

university), 91 cases in French culture (5 cases in middle school - 86 cases in middle school and high school), 6 cases in intercultural approach (high school And pre-university) was identified, while no reference to French-language culture was found. It should be noted that the focus on teaching culture and national identity has been more than teaching French culture, but there is no balance for teaching these two cultures in textbooks of two levels of education and sometimes we see the complete elimination of one component in one year or one level of education. On the other hand, adopting an intercultural approach, in order to balance and synchronize the themes of Iranian culture and French culture (or more generally, French language culture) is very weak and is observed in only 6 cases among all textbooks, which indicates the authors' inattention to books. This shows the authors' ignorance about this important issue. It is worth mentioning that the lack of attention to the intercultural approach leads to the adoption of defense policies and extremes in educational localization, which leads to the lack of public awareness of new methods of education and communication and deprivation of the indigenous community of most knowledge in other countries. It should be noted that applying the criteria in this table, along with identifying and considering the needs of Iranian language learners, can be a useful and effective solution in arranging future French language textbooks.

