Effective Activities and Methods for Teaching/ Learning French Culture with Advanced Level French Specialization Students

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an analysis of "Effective Activities and Methods for Teaching/ Learning French Culture with Advanced Level French Specializing Students." The information and data needed for this paper are retrieved from the textbooks on French Culture, and some Internet websites. It is aimed to solve the difficulties faced by students and to find active learning strategies such as the individual, group work, and pair work activities which are used to achieve the effective teaching and learning. During the research study, CDs, DVDs, authentic texts are also applied as intake activities; interactive questions and answering, assignments are also included as organizational activities; and French and Myanmar Culture's comparison, PowerPoint presentations, discussions are taken into account as demonstrative and expressive activities. Then, 100 Advanced Level French Specializing Students participated to answer the twenty one closed and opened questions and their answers are recorded as a survey data and analyzed and presented in graphs with figures using "Descriptive and Analytical methods. In this paper, activities are included in order to improve students' creativity; critical and divergent thinking skills; collaboration; discussion, presentation and communications skills which would prepare them for the employment.

Key words: **Effective Teaching/ Learning, advantages, essentials skills, student-centered learning**

Introduction

As the YUFL aimed to gain the autonomy in the future, there is a need to update the academic syllabus and teaching Style and to build up the capacities of teachers. As a university of foreign languages, students have to learn all four skills of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing are included/integrated in the French Teaching programs besides having other modules such as French Literature, French History, French Culture, Translation and Interpretation, Research paper writing and Public speaking and presentation skills. It is essential to learn about the culture of the target language. In this age of booming advanced technology, there is an opportunity to share and learn about the languages and cultures of one nationality to another. Today's 21ˢᵗ Century students who are the "Generation z" born between (1995-2009) tend to learn the subjects and information they find interesting using different modern technology gadgets such as smartphones, iPads, Smart board from the Internet without the need to leave their home. And that is the fact that the students' interest in learning has played in an important role should be taken

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into account. It is true that boring conventional lecture style teaching methods are not able to get the attention of today's students. Obviously, the four language skills are not enough for students who have high personal skills, and the interesting contents accompanied by the 21ˢᵗ century skills which is also known as "Skills for Today" essential for the future are needed to be integrated linking with the effective teaching and learning methods. It is also critical to help students improve their Emotional Intelligence (EQ). This is the reason why this research on "Effective Teaching/ Learning French Culture with Advanced Level French Specializing Students" is conducted for the final year French language students to become skillful and learn the French culture at the same time.

Research Procedures & Method

In the 1ˢᵗ Semester, the students were taught the French Culture module with Teacher-Centered Approach which is the Traditional method.

And then, in the 2ⁿᵈ Semester, activities which include the Active learning strategies were used through the Student-Centered Learning approaches. During the teaching process, different activities such as intake, organizational, demonstrative and expressive activities are used through variety of presentative approaches including the French and Myanmar Culture's Comparison, Presentations, PowerPoint presentations, group work and pair work Discussions, Interactive question and answering in order to bring the effective outcome of teaching and learning French. The Textbooks on French Culture, Internet websites, as well as CDs, DVDs, Authentic texts were used for searching suitable activities. After the semester, 21 questions were prepared in bilingual_ English and Myanmar for the 100 French Advanced Level Students to be able to have their comments and answers as survey data which were analyzed using descriptive and analytical methods.

Literature Review

Culture can be defined as "The sum of attitudes, customs, and beliefs that distinguishes one group of people from another. Culture is transmitted, through language, material objects, ritual, institutions, and art, from one generation to the next."[1] in the British Dictionary, and "The habits, traditions, and beliefs of a country, society, or group of people"[2] in the Cambridge Learner's Dictionary.

Active learning strategies

"Active learning engages students in learning, using activities such as reading, writing, discussion, or problem solving, which promote analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of class content.

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[1] https://www.dictionary.com/browse/culture

[2] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/culture

Active in-class learning also provides students with informal opportunities for feedback on how well they understood the material"[1]

21st Century Education

"A 21st century education is about giving students the skills they need to succeed in this new world, and helping them grow the confidence to practice those skills. With so much information readily available to them, 21st century skills focus more on making sense of that information, sharing and using it in smart ways."[2]

21st Century Skills

"21st Century skills are 12 abilities that today's students need to succeed in their careers during the Information Age. They are Critical thinking, Creativity, Collaboration, Communication, Information literacy, Media literacy, Technology literacy, Flexibility, Leadership, Initiative, Productivity and Social skills."[3]

Teacher Centered Approach (TCL)

"A teaching method where the **teacher** is in actively involved in teaching while the learners are in a passive, receptive mode listening as the teacher teaches."[4]

Student-Centered Learning (SCL)

"Student-centered learning is an approach to learning in which learners choose not only what to study but also how and why. At the heart of the learning environment are learner responsibility and activity, in contrast to the emphasis on instructor control and coverage of academic content found in conventional, didactic teaching."[5]

The study in the field of effective teaching/ learning French culture with the students of YUFL has not done by anyone in Myanmar until now, so it will be considered as original. This is to analyze the benefits and skills to improve the technics in learning for Myanmar students. Therefore this research is to solve the difficulties faced by students to achieve the effective teaching and learning and gain today's essential skills: creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration.

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[1] http://www.queensu.ca/teachingandlearning/modules/students/22_active_learning_strategies.html

[2] https://cetl.uconn.edu/active-learning-strategies/

[3] https://thinkstrategicforschools.com/education-21st-century/

[4] https://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/*developing-pedagogical-skills-for-teachers/55851*

[5] https://lincs.ed.gov/sites/default/files/6%20_TEAL_Student-Centered.pdf

Research Questions

Four research questions identified in this paper are:
1. Which approach would bring the effective French Culture Teaching and Learning?
2. Which activities should be applied to overcome the difficulties in learning?
3. What kind of skills could be achieved?
4. What benefits would be gained?

Principal Hypotheses

Transition to student- centered approach from the teacher-centered approach would allow students' free thinking and decision making to become more active, responsive and interested in learning for effective teaching and learning the French Culture.

- Applying Intake, Organizational, Demonstrative and Expressive Activities would help students to overcome their difficulties in learning French Culture.
- Those activities would help students gain the essential skills such as creativity, communication, collaboration and strong-self-esteem.
- Students would be well-prepared for the employment without any difficulties by gaining more confidence in interactive communication, delivering presentations, and many other benefits.

Objectives

The objectives of this paper are to solve the difficulties faced by students, to achieve the effective teaching and learning and to improve students' essential skills which would be a preparation for them for their future employment.

I. Activities used for developing students' skills

Learning activities can be categorized into four types: Intake Activities, Organizational Activities, Demonstrative Activities and Expressive Activities.

Initially, when the 2nd Semester started, Students were taught by using Student-Centered Teaching based on activities mentioned above for their active learning strategies. This learning course lasted for three months.

Activity 1

In activity (1), students were taught French Culture by using CDs, DVDs as Intake, demonstrative and organizational activities. Using CDs, DVDs may attract students and may bring good results.

(1) Firstly, students were divided into groups of two or four persons in which both clever students and slow learning students included in balance.

(2) In doing activity, the teacher gave instructions to students about rules and regulations that they must obey and about the allocated time.

(3) Teacher made them to listen to DVD or CD for three times.

(4) By watching DVD or listening to CD, students had to do Note-taking on what characters said and carefully learn speaking styles and manners according to teacher's instruction.

(5) Then students had to make an effort to prepare within limited time so that they could do their activity successfully.

(6) When the limited time was over, students had to do activities such as role-play in paired work or small-group work by imitating speaking styles and manners as observed in DVD or CD, describing appearances of characters, and summarizing the story.

Doing such activities will improve students' creativity and communication.

Activity 2

In activity (2), when being taught French Culture as an organizational activity, students were made to automatically use activities in order that Advanced Level French Specializing students became active and motivated.

(1) Firstly, the teacher made students do warm-up activities for drawing their attention to the things in lessons.

(2) Then, the teacher explained a little bit about the lessons to students and put them into groups, each group had one or two persons, including clever and slow learning students in balance.

(3) Teacher gave instruction about rules and regulations that students must obey, and the limited time for them.

(4) Then, students were made to start reading the text one by one, or with a partner.

(5) Then, they had to make an effort to finish their text reading successfully within limited time.

(6) When limited time was over, participants were made to do activities like discussing with each other, doing Interactive Questioning and Answering between teacher and students.

In teaching and learning by using French Culture texts like discussing and interactive questioning and answering between teacher and students or between students and students will be able to build up the good relationship not only among students, but also between students and teacher, creating more interaction in teaching and learning process as well as strengthening their social awareness.

Activity 3

In activity (3), while teaching French Culture as demonstrative & expressive collocation, students were made to do activities by using things related to French and Myanmar Culture. Doing like that not only supports learning but also making greater efforts to get the interest and better understanding in communication with the others. Thus students' skills will be improved.

(1) Firstly, students were divided into groups, each group might include two or five persons, balancing clever and slow learning students.

(2) In doing activity instructions about rules and regulations were given to be obeyed by students studying French, things do be done in the activity, and the time of starting and ending.

(3) After that, students had to choose how to say comparing things in French Culture that they had already learned according to teacher's instructions.

(4) Students had to make an effort in preparing to cooperate for data collection, discuss, knowledge share and team work in order that they could do their presentation well within limited time.

(5) When limited time was over, students had to do comparison presentation activities as they had prepared for their own group work.

Doing such comparison presentation activities can improve students' creativity, communication skills, critical thinking skills and presentation skills, and can be helpful to teaching and learning.

Activity 4

In activity (4), students were made to do activities when teaching and learning by using authentic texts related to French Culture as intake and organizational activities. Finding and using such the authentic texts can attract students to participate in activity and give much support and benefits to teaching and learning.

(1) Firstly, paired work was used by providing two persons in a group and placing clever and slow learning ones in the group.

(2) In doing activity, teacher must give instructions to students about rules and regulations that they must obey and things to do, and limited time for them.

(3) Different authentic texts that students would be interested were started to be distributed.

(4) Authentic text was read and observed in order that activity could be done successfully within the limited time. And then discussing was prepared and done.

(5) When limited time was over, students were made to do interactive question-answering among participants and presentation in class.

Doing such activities by using authentic texts make students motivated and attracted to participate in any activities, and also causes them to achieve different ideas, multiple intelligent, divergent thinking skills. Moreover it improves essential collaboration skills.

Activity 5

In activity (5), teaching French Culture by using French Culture textbook and authentic texts, is a method applied to do one of the activities. Using such French Culture textbook and authentic texts made students learn common things related to French Culture as well as lessons, so they were more interested in it and got success in teaching and learning.

(1)In this activity, individual work that each student would do was used.

(2) When students were doing activity, teacher gave limited time for them and instructions for them to do necessary things.

(3) Teacher gave instruction to students to do French Culture textbook page or started to distribute authentic texts which would be interesting for them.

(4) After that, students did reading and observing French Culture textbook or authentic text in order that they could do activity successfully within the limited time.

(5) Students had to look up and choose slangs, sayings, expressions and adjectives from the Texts, to explain meanings of slang, saying and expressions in French language, to look up antonyms and synonyms of adjectives and to build sentences in expressions they already found.

(6) When limited time was over, students were made to discuss with each other and to do activities in which competitions were held after dividing groups in the class.

Doing activities when teaching and learning using French Culture textbook and authentic texts made students active, happy, interested and motivated, and they all started to cooperate and participate and have desire to learn.

Activity 6

In activity (6), students had to use a method of activities which include the Group PowerPoint presentation related to French Culture they preferred instead of doing tutorial while they were being taught French Culture as demonstrative & expressive activities. Doing this activity made Team work strong, know how to do data collection, share knowledge, and improve their Time management. So their skills can be improved and teaching and learning became effective.

(1)Firstly, teacher mixed students, clever or slow learning, and divide them into groups, each group had five persons.

(2) While doing Group PowerPoint presentation, teacher gave instruction on things to obey and rules and regulations, coordinate and limited time that students would do.

(3) Twenty minutes were limited to do presentation for a group.

(4) After that, teacher made each group to choose about a topic they wish to do presentation on French Culture allowing their creation without any limitations.

(5) After that, each group had a chance to create Group PowerPoint presentation they liked during the fixed time, and students had to create perfect PowerPoint slides of comparison, or do description within limited time by putting photos and data collection in a comparative way.

After doing Group PowerPoint presentation as group work, by using discussed things related to Culture, discussing, answering questions helped students gain good favorable relationship, as well as to know how to collaborate, to understand technology literacy, to develop leadership skill, Presentation and Communication skills, and have Strong Self-esteem and self-confidence. They will be able to get benefits in teaching and learning process as well.

II. Questionnaire for the students

In preparing the questionnaires for students, the questions were prepared in two languages Myanmar and French so that students can give the specific answers and express what they really wanted to say. There were twenty one closed and opened questions. They were printed out and

distributed to the 100 students of advanced level French specializing. Their answers were collected as the survey data and the results were analyzed and presented in figures.

In those questions, students were asked about things such as difficulties that students had to face in teaching and learning, using CD, DVDs, students' view on learning French Culture by using method of Student-Centered learning and by using Traditional Method and skills coming out from applying Effective teaching/learning Culture, using authentic texts, applying new technology such as Smart phones, iPads, email, group messenger, doing Individual, Paired and Small-Group activities, assignment, homework, group work, presentation.

III. Analysis of the students' answers

The results of the students' answers are analyzed as follows:

1. Do you have difficulties in learning about French Culture using Traditional Method?

Traditional Method

20%

80%

- ■ Yes
- ■ No
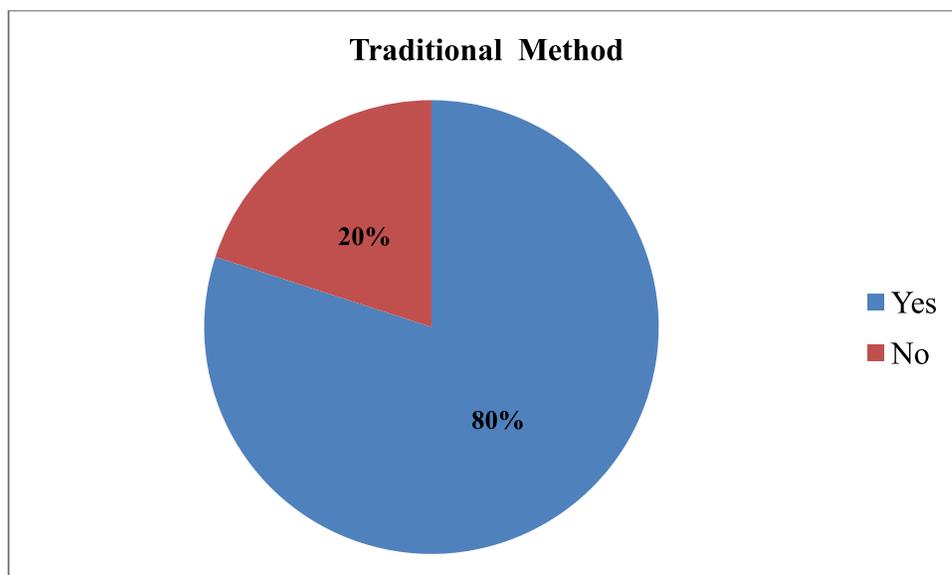
In this question, 80 % of students answered that they found it difficult to do teaching and learning French Culture by using Traditional Method and 20 % students answered that they had no difficulty. 20 % students were much dependent upon teachers and satisfying only what teachers taught. It's considered that some Myanmar students preferred learning parrot-fashion.

2. What kind of difficulties can be occurred due to the conventional/ traditional method in teaching and learning French Culture?

Difficulties of Traditionl Method

- ■ No motivation
- 30%
- 15%
- 20%
- 35%
- ■ Boring to listen to lectures
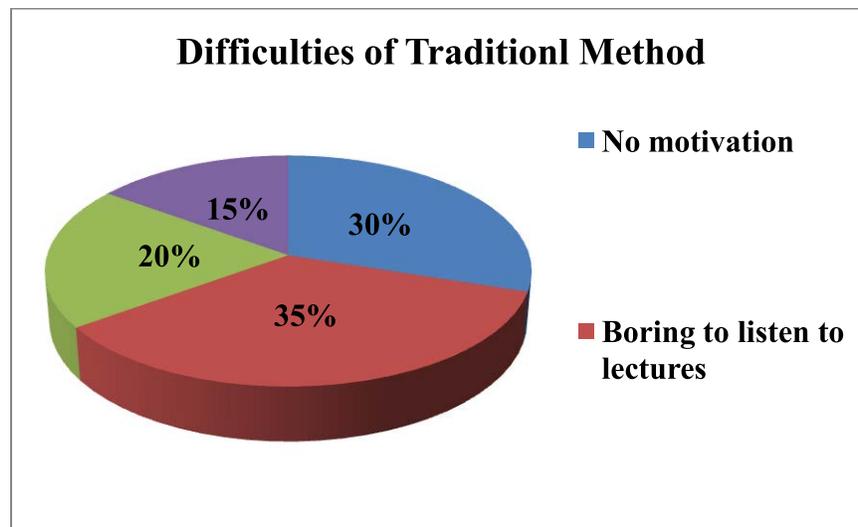
The answers for "No motivation" and "Boring to listen to lectures" are about 30% and about 15% of the students answer "Understanding only what teachers teach and reliance on teachers" and "Loss of self-confidence". So, it can be found that the traditional method is indeed boring.

3. What kind of approach should be used for effective teaching learning process?

Effective teaching learning process

82%

18%

| Teacher-Centered Learning (TCL) | Student-Centered Learning (SCL) |
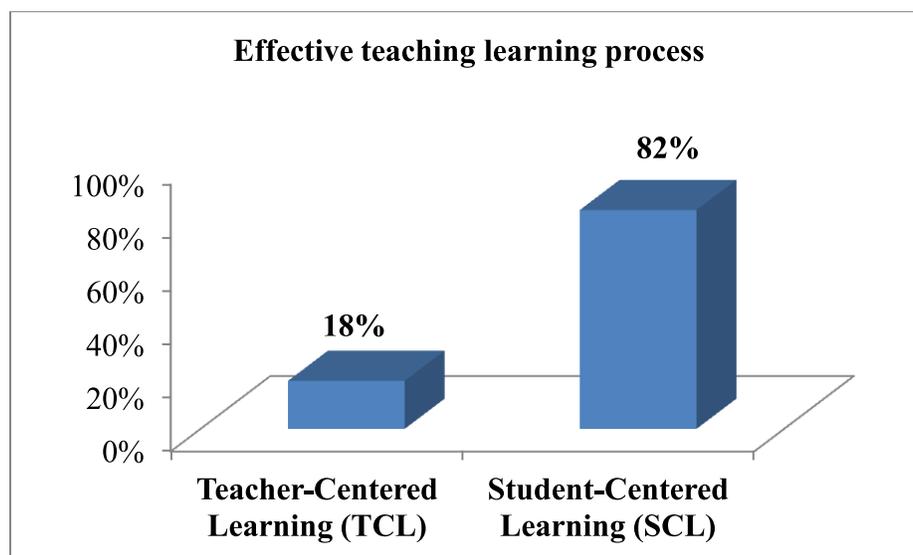
As the 82% of the Advanced Level French Specializing Students say "SCL" whereas only 18% of them say "TCL", it is found that the majority of students prefer the modern education system "SCL".

4. Can benefits be gained by using CDs and DVDs in language teaching learning process?
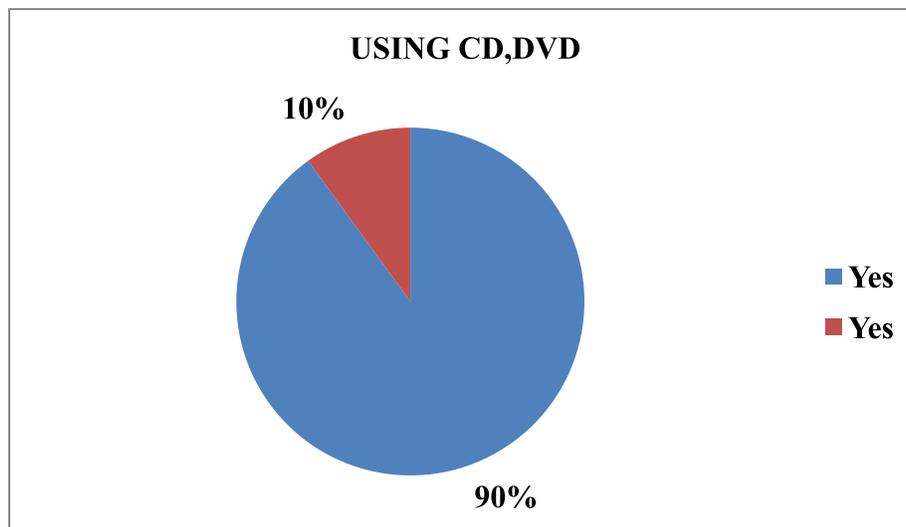
USING CD,DVD

As the 90% of the Students say "Yes" whereas only 10% of them say "No", it is very effective in language teaching learning process by using CDs and DVDs.
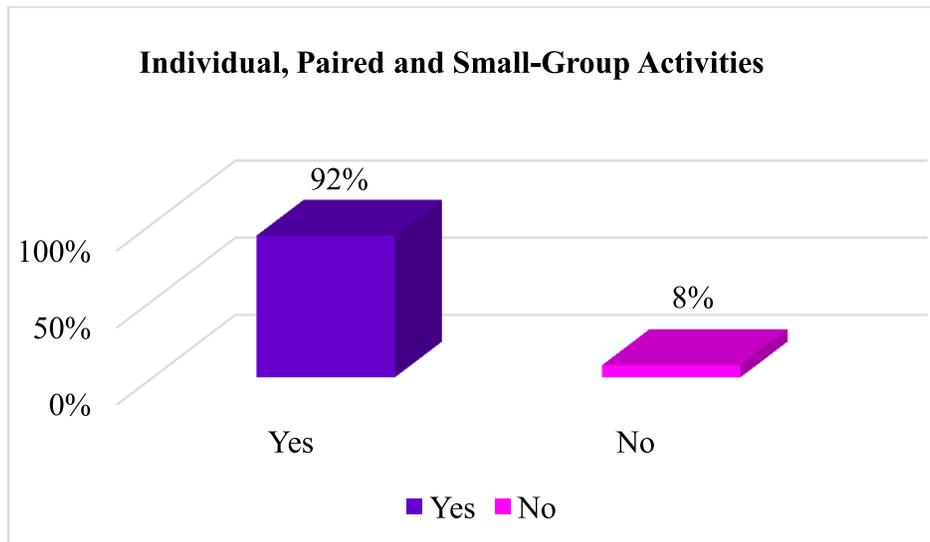
5. What kind of benefits can be gained by using CDs and DVDs in language teaching learning process?

Benefits of CD, DVD
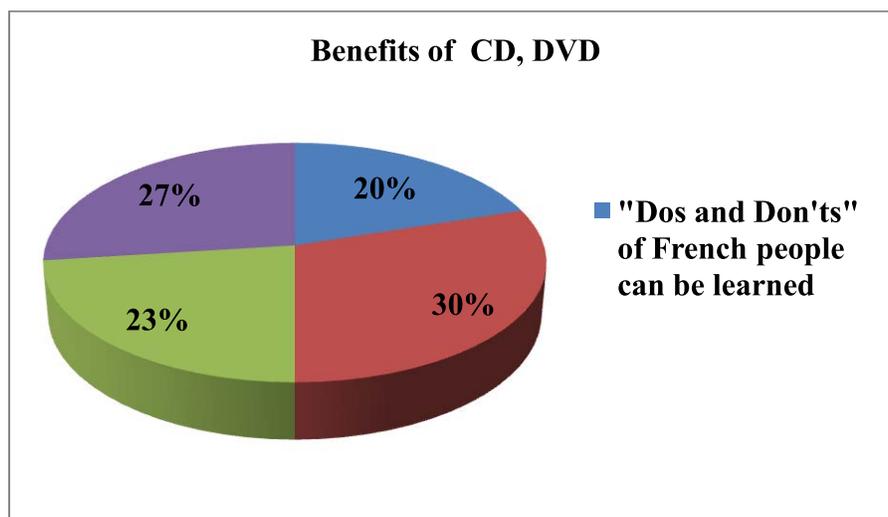
As the answers for "Dos and Don'ts of French people can be learned" and "The manners and styles of speaking of them can be learned at the same time can be learned" are about 20% and for "The speaking styles varied in terms of speakers' emotions and contents can be learned" and "It

can be imitated to talk about the (desired) topic that one prefer" are about 30%. So, it can be said that it is very beneficial to CDs and DVDs in language teaching learning process.

6. Do you think that doing Individual, Paired and Small-Group activities can help the teaching and learning more effective?

Individual, Paired and Small-Group Activities

92%

100%

50%

8%

0%

Yes   No

■ Yes ■ No

As the 92% and 8% of the students answer "Yes", and "No" respectively, it can be analyzed that such kinds of activities can help the teaching and learning more effective.

7. What kind of benefits can be gained by doing Individual, Paired and Small-Group Activities?

Advantages of Individual, Paired and Small-Group Activities

27%   21%

10%

19%   23%

■ **Knowledge sharing**

■ **Social awareness**

■ **Critical thinking**
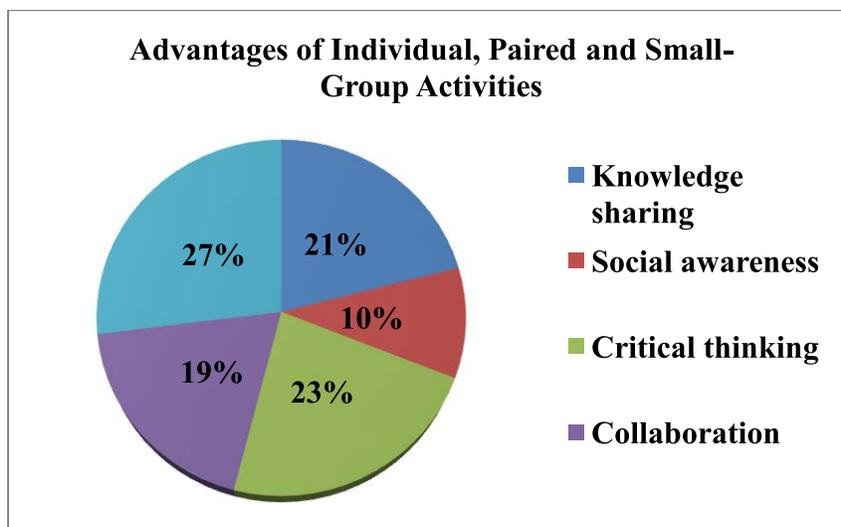
■ **Collaboration**

By doing Individual, Paired and Small-Group activities, not only the skills such as Knowledge sharing, Critical thinking, Collaboration, Discussing but also the Social Skills awareness can be

gained. So it can be analyzed that doing activities can help the teaching and learning more effective.

8. Do you like the asking questions among your fellow students, or between teachers and students during the teaching period of French Culture?

Interactive Question-answering
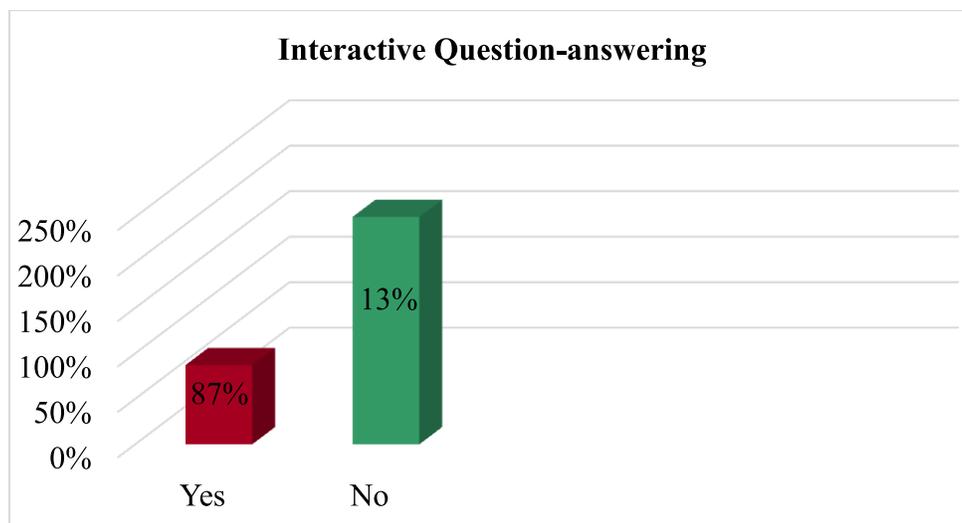
Since 87% of the students say "Yes" and 13% say "No". So the majority of the students like the asking questions.

9. Why do you like the asking questions among your fellow students or between teachers and students during the teaching period of French Culture?

Advantages of Interactive Question-answering
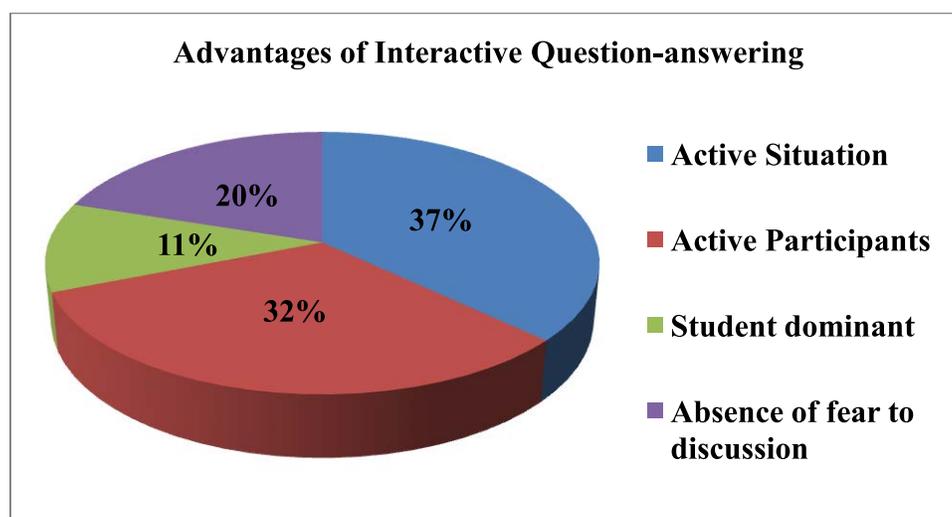
It is found that 37% of the students say "Active Situation"; 32% say "Active Participants"; 11% say "Student dominant", and 20% say "Absence of fear to discussion", so this activity is very beneficial in teaching and learning process.

10. Can it be helpful in teaching and learning by making comparison on culture of French and Myanmar in writing and speaking form?

Culture comparison study
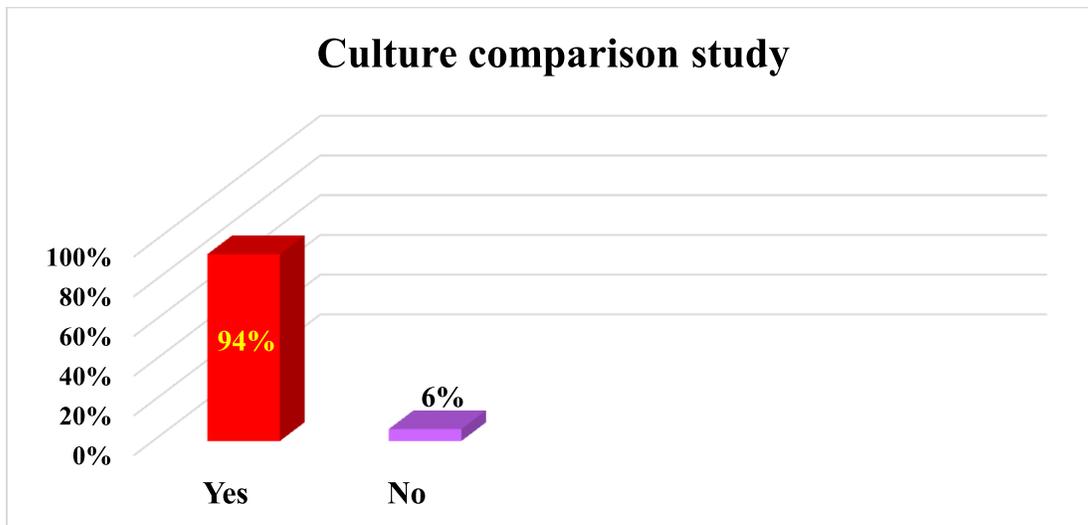
The 94% of the students answer, "Yes" and only 6% answer "No". So, it can be analyzed that Culture comparison study can make the teaching/learning effective.

11. What kind of benefits can be gained from teaching and learning methods by making comparison on culture of French and Myanmar in writing and speaking form?

Benefits of Culture comparison study

■ Improving Presentation Skills

■ Improving Critical Thinking Skills
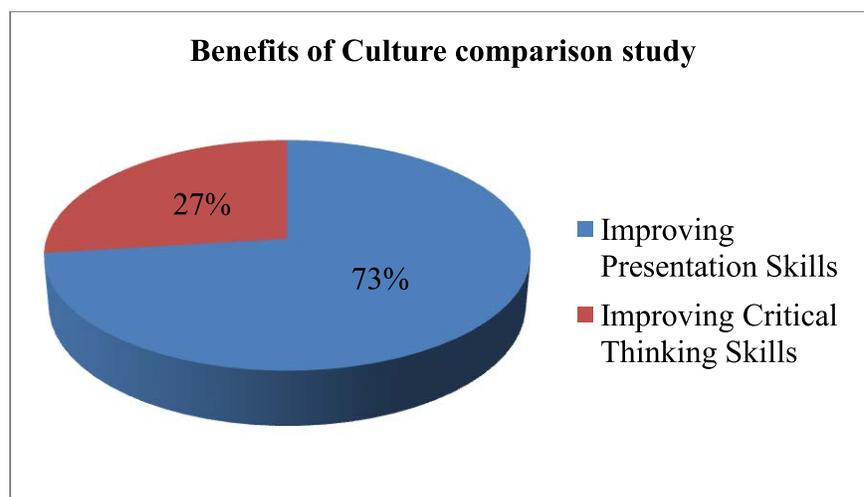
The benefits such as "improving Presentation Skills and Critical Thinking Skills" can be gained. Moreover, it can help students widen their knowledge and improve the communication skills.

12. Do you like the teaching and learning French Culture using authentic texts?
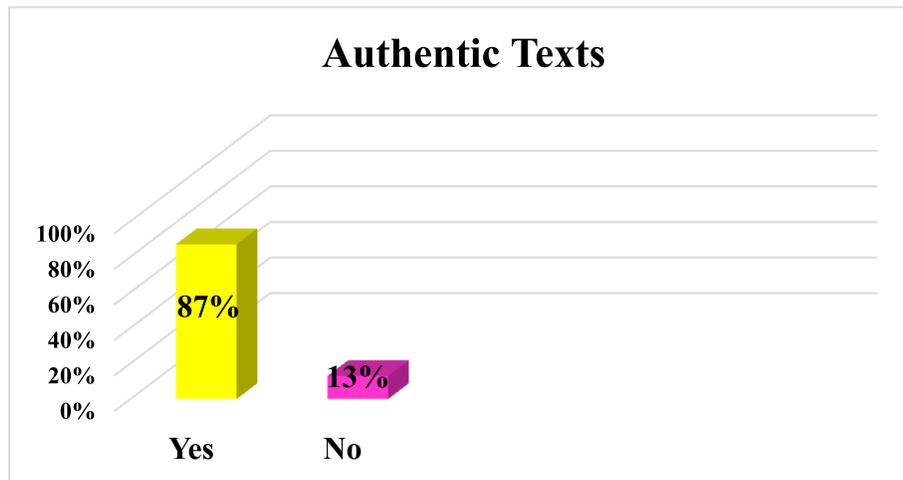
The 87% of the students say "Yes" while 13% say "No", it can be said that these authentic texts can strengthen the interest of students and create the active learning for effective teaching and learning.

13. What kind of benefits can be gained by using authentic texts in teaching French Culture?
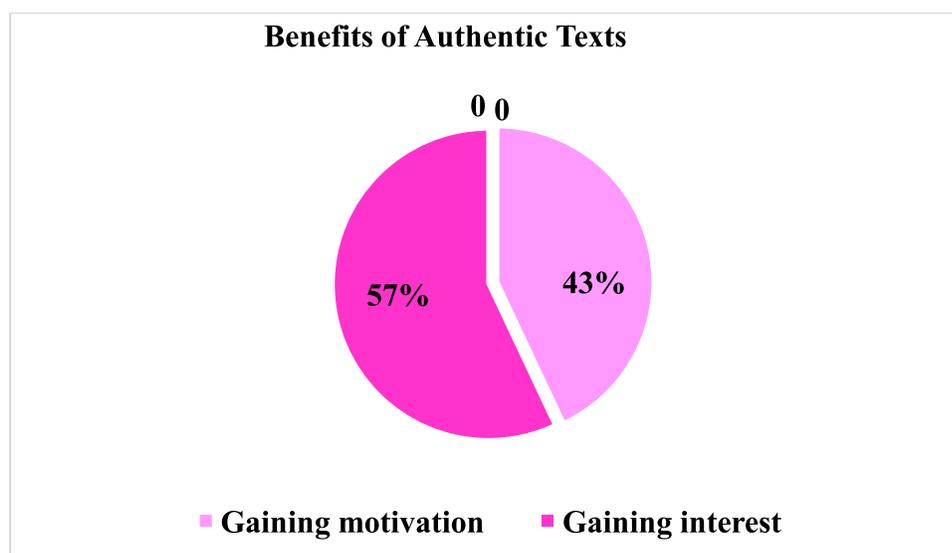
It is found that 43% of the students answered "gaining motivation", and 57% of the students answered "gaining interest". So using such kind of teaching aide can bring the effective teaching and learning.

14. What kind of benefits can be gained from asking students to find Slang, Saying, expressions, adjectives from the French Culture textbook, authentic texts, to translate them in France, and fining the opposite, synonyms of adjectives, and to form sentences using the expressions?
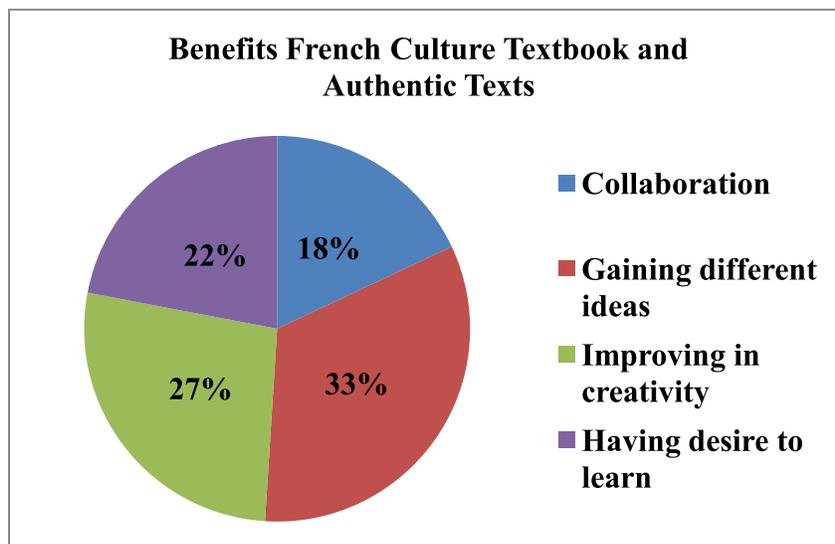
The benefits such as collaboration, gaining different ideas, improving in creativity, having desire to learn, and the effective teaching/ learning can be gained.
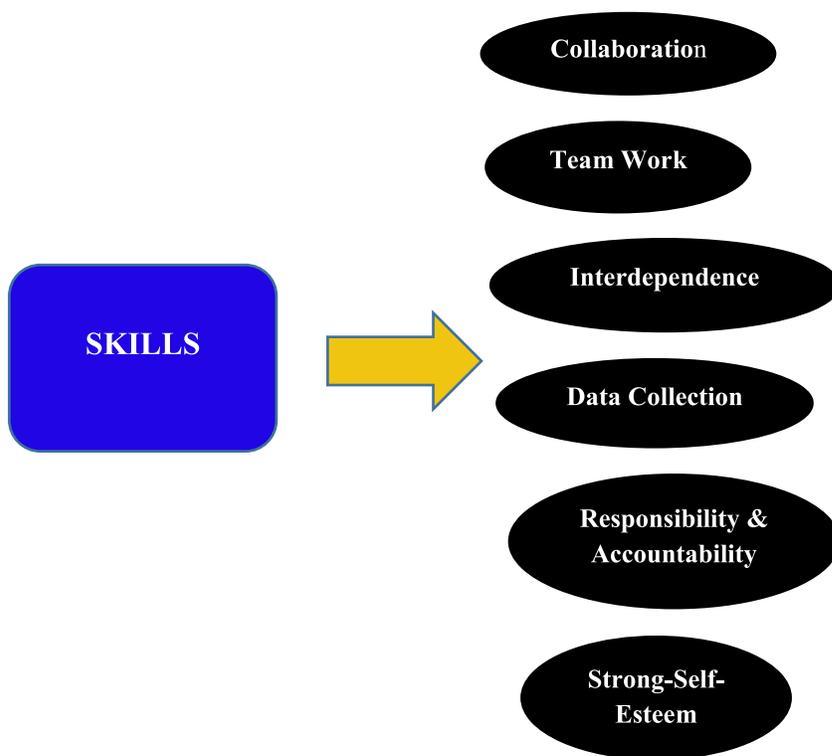
15. Doing the PowerPoint presentation as a group work on your preferred topics on culture instead of tutorial, do you think that it can help you improve skills?
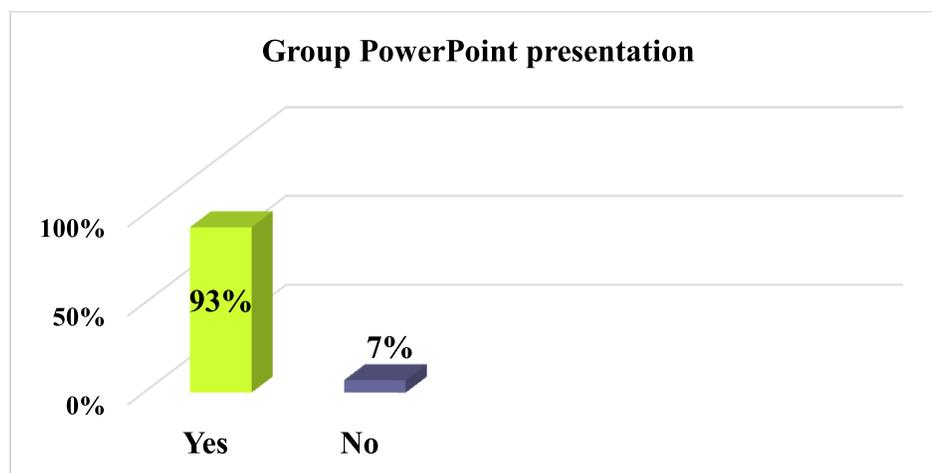
Since there is 93% of students answer "Yes", it is found to be an effected teaching and learning activity.

16. What kind of skills will be improved by doing the PowerPoint presentation as a group work on your preferred topics on culture instead of tutorial?

The students answered that collaboration, data collection, team work, responsibility and accountability, interdependence and Strong-Self-esteem will be improved.


In my opinion, by letting students do the PowerPoint presentation as a group work on their preferred topics on culture instead of tutorial can help them become skillful and beneficial.

17. Do you like to be given the assignment, homework and group work presentation to do the discussion with teachers on selected topics on culture and using email, group messenger, voice mail?

**Using email, Group messenger, Voice mail**
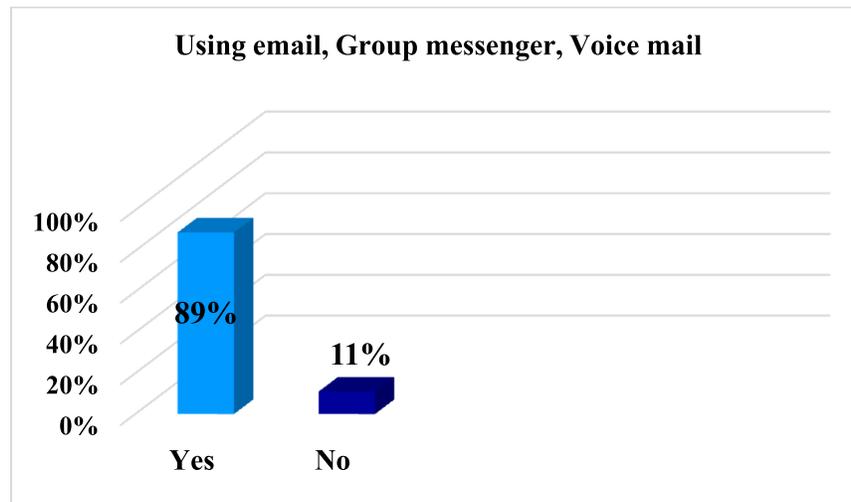
When asked this question, the 89% say they like it to be given the assignment, homework and group work presentation to do the discussion with teachers on selected topics on culture and using email, Group messenger, voice mail. So it can be analyzed that the Advanced Level French Specializing Students want to choose the teaching and learning methods which save time and effective.

18. What kind of benefits can be gained by using the new technology such as Smart phones, iPads to communicate with teachers via email, group messenger and voice mail for discussion on selected topics?

Benefits of Using New Technology
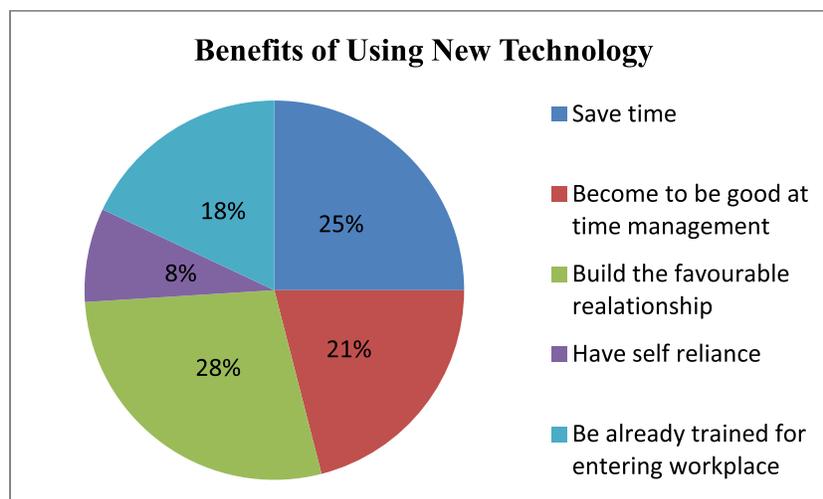
By using the new technology such as Smart phones, iPads to communicate with teachers via email, group messenger and voice mail for discussion on selected topics can help students gain benefits such as saving time; becoming good in time management; building the favorable relationship; having self-reliance; and trained for entering workplace, which can lead to effective teaching/ learning.

19. Can the difficulties be solved due to the effective teaching /learning French culture using Student-Centered Learning?

Using Student-Centered Learning

90%

10%

100%
80%
60%
40%
20%
0%

Yes   No
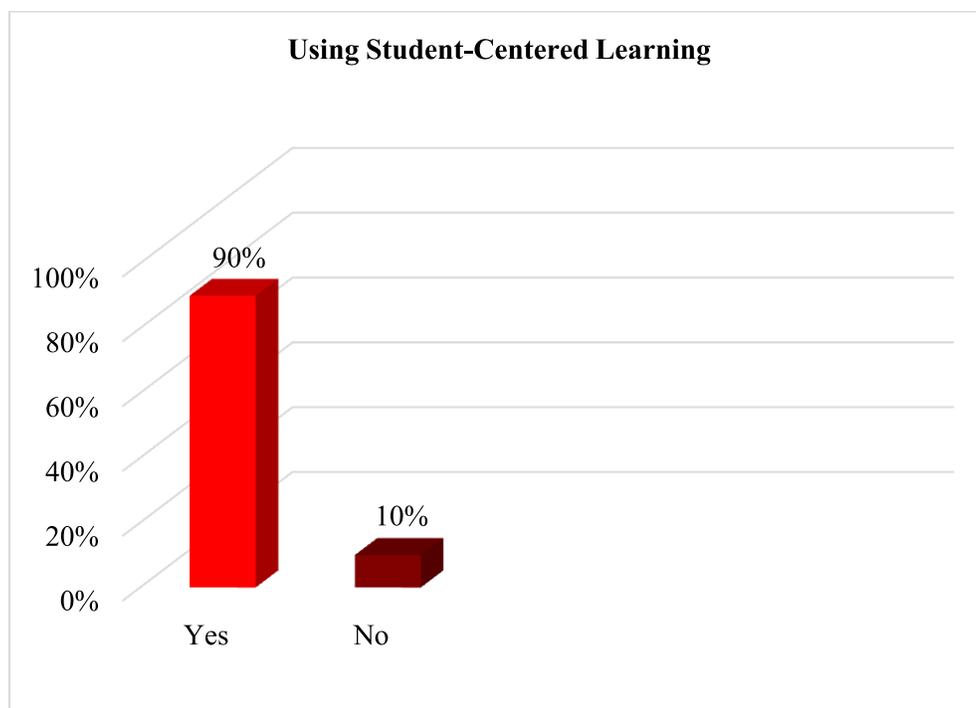
As it is found that the 90% of the Students answer that they can solve the difficulties due to the effective teaching /learning French culture using Student-Centered Learning, today's students become to like the methods of learning and teaching which is more active, more interesting, and gives more freedom to make own decisions.

20. What kind of essentials skills can be attained by teaching and learning French Culture using Student-Centered Learning?

The Students answer that they can attain creativity, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, divergent thinking and multiple intelligent and Strong-self-esteem skills by teaching and learning French Culture using Student-Centered Learning.
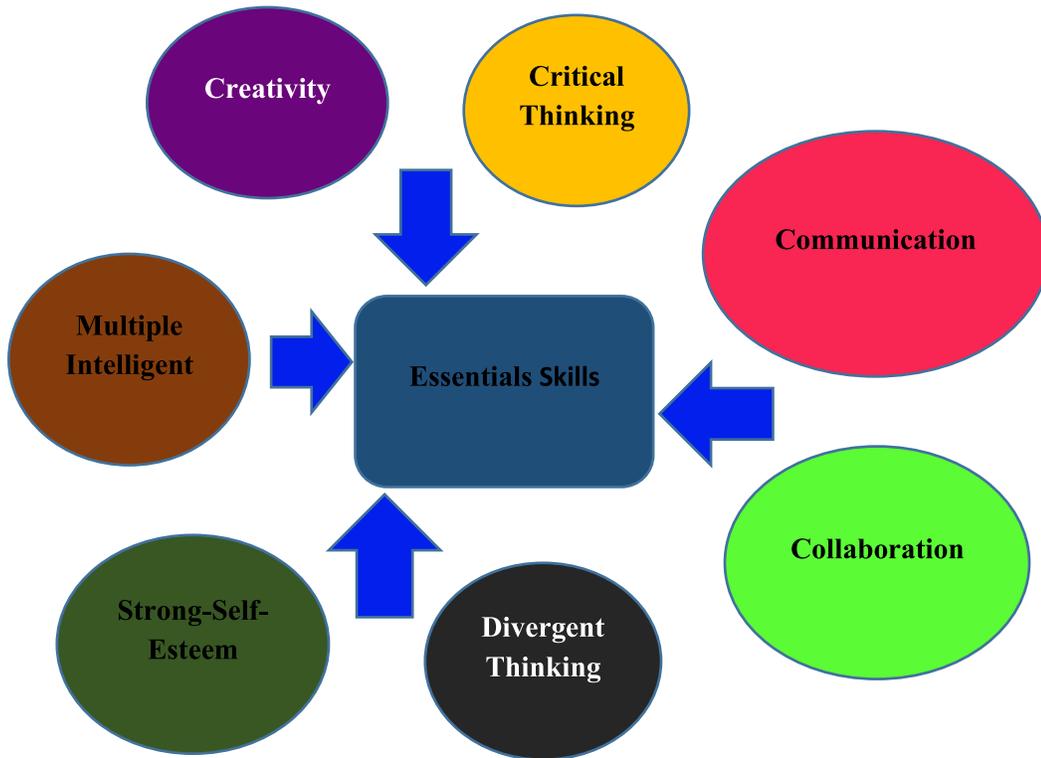
It can be analyzed that students can attain the 21st Century Skills which are essentials skills.

21. What are the benefits to improve these essential skills for you?
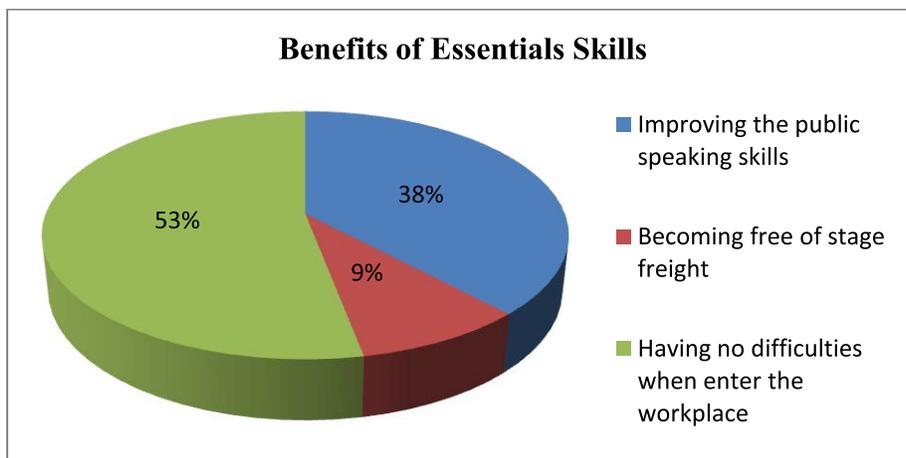
It can be analyzed that the Students can have benefits such as "improving the public speaking skills"; "becoming free of stage freight", and "having no difficulties when enter the workplace".

Findings & Discussion

Advanced Level French Specializing Students were already quite competent in four language skills since it was their final semester, final year. Yet, it is very critical to build up the harmony between the teachers and students when reaching for effective teaching and learning in the new reform of the 21ˢᵗ Century education. In this process, the teaching and learning must be active, strategic and independent; must have change of behavior, development of goals and plans, skills in cooperation, dialogue and creating knowledge with others. As teachers, they need the teaching experiences, skills and preparation of lessons considering the facts such as students' thinking, feelings, talents, needs, etc. They also need the motivation for creativity and change, as well as motivating the students in learning. The teachers themselves must be active with non-authority, building up the favorable relationship with students. Only then, the successful learning and effective teaching and learning will be resulted.

There have been some challenges of students' over-relying on teachers due to traditional methods such as teacher-centered approaches in teaching and learning about French Culture; needs of interest on lessons, lack of motivation to learn and participate in classroom which are hindering to bring out the communication in target language.

Therefore, it's found that most of Advanced Level French Specializing students of YUFL preferred using Student-Centered Learning on French Culture, so this approach is the most effective one for French Culture Teaching and Learning process.

Transition to student- centered approach from the teacher-centered approach must allow students' free thinking and decision making to become more active, responsive and interested in learning for effective teaching and learning the French Culture.

By seeing the results of above mentioned learning activities, it's found that those activities had much support, to solve difficulties of students and to make effective teaching and learning. And by analyzing the survey from students' doing, their essential skills could already be found.

Using CD and DVD as Intake Demonstrative and Organizational Activities improves students' creativity and Communication. The students could do Knowledge sharing, perform collaboration, have discussion, having strong Social awareness Skills, and develop Critical thinking skills due to the use of Individual, Paired and Small-Group Activities.

Discussing among students, doing Interactive Question-answering, between teacher and students, using Organizational Activities makes students or between students and teacher having a favorable relationship and causes interaction in teaching and learning, and improves Social Awareness.

Using French & Myanmar Culture Comparison presentation Activities as Demonstrative & Expressive Activities improves Students' creativity, Communication skills, Critical thinking skills and Presentation skills.

Using French Culture Textbook and Authentic Texts as Intake, Organizational, Demonstrative & Expressive Activities makes students active, happy, interest and motivate and get Different ideas, have desire to learn and finally improves Collaboration, Multiple intelligent, divergent thinking skills.

Using Group PowerPoint presentation as Demonstrative & Expressive Activities makes students strengthening Team work, doing Data collection, doing Knowledge sharing, having Favorable relationship, possessing Strong self-esteem and self-confidence, and improving Time Management, Collaboration, Technology literacy, leadership, Presentation and Communication skills.

Using Smart phones, iPads, being New Technology when students describe things they like, sending Assignment, Homework, Group work presentation to teacher and discussing with each other through email, Group messenger and voice mail reduces time for students and makes them respect time and know how to do Time management, make them having a favorable relationship among them, causes them to rely on themselves and know how to apply technology, and makes them already train to enter workplace.

90 percent of Advanced Level French Specializing students learned French Culture by using method of Student-Centered Learning, so they answered that teaching and learning were effective and they could solve their difficulties.

Therefore, in conclusion, Intake, Organizational, Demonstrative and Expressive Activities should be used to become Effective Teaching/Learning the French Culture and to solve students' difficulties. Applying Intake, Organizational, Demonstrative and Expressive activities help students overcome their difficulties in learning French Culture. Because of those activities, it is considered that the students gain those essential skills as creativity, communication, collaboration, strong self-esteem. It is found that today students prefer and use learning methods to allow them to become freer and more active and get more interested and make self-decision.

Students are well-prepared for the employment without any difficulties by gaining more confidence in interactive communication, delivering presentations, and many other benefits.

Because of improving those Essential skills, it is considered that they can get such benefits as entering workplace without difficulty, getting easy and convenient situations, performing well in public presentations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is important to prepare the activities which would motivate the students to learn. And it is also important to update the effective teaching approach according to the needs of the students. This paper is analyzed for teaching French culture by using Student-Centered Learning (SCL). With this approach the students can get effective teaching and learning, can solve the

difficulties faced by them and improve their creativity; critical and divergent thinking; collaboration; discussion, presentation and communications skills which would prepare them for the employment. These findings would help a lot in teaching and learning French culture.

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