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## **The Teaching of French as A Foreign Language at Tertiary Level: From Prescriptive to Descriptive - A Sociolinguistics Approach**

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### **Abstract**

French as a Foreign Language (FLE) teaching has undergone many transformations, from the grammar-translation model to the cognitive and direct methods to the more recent versions of communicative approaches. The focus on Francophonie instead of only on Metropolitan France has expanded and found its way in the teachings manuals and the classroom practice to introduce students to different uses, vocabulary and accents. Migration trends have also brought to the language other verbal or non-verbal items (foreign words, “steupsing”) that are now part of 21<sup>st</sup> century French. We will try in this paper to show why it is important as instructors to be mindful of these changes, while also reflecting on how to approach the recent phonological and grammatical shifts (affrication, disappearance of the “un” sound in metropole, disjunctive pronouns replacing demonstrative ones) noted over the past decades that have transformed the way French sounds and is used by the younger generations. The FLE teachers find themselves in a new situation where they have to decide whether to teach “the rule” vs “the usage”, that is the way the language is evolving, or at least make the conscious decision to expose non-native students to the different existing variations, so that they can recognize them when they see or hear them in real-life situations.

**Keywords:** affrication; migration; pronunciation; sociolinguistics; variations