



VOLUME 22 ISSUE 3

The International Journal of
Literacies

French Levelled Readers

Their Efficacy in Measuring Literacy

STÉPHANNIE LEVEILLÉ, MICHÈLE MINOR-CORRIVEAU, ALI REGUIGUI, AND ROXANNE BÉLANGER

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LITERACIES

<http://thelearner.com/>

First published in 2015 in Champaign, Illinois, USA
by Common Ground Publishing
University of Illinois Research Park
2001 South First St, Suite 202
Champaign, IL 61820 USA

www.CommonGroundPublishing.com

ISSN: 2325-0136

© 2015 (individual papers), the author(s)

© 2015 (selection and editorial matter) Common Ground

All rights reserved. Apart from fair dealing for the purposes of study, research, criticism or review as permitted under the applicable copyright legislation, no part of this work may be reproduced by any process without written permission from the publisher. For permissions and other inquiries, please contact <cg-support@commongroundpublishing.com>.

The International Journal of Literacies is a peer-reviewed scholarly journal.

Typeset in CGScholar.

<http://www.commongroundpublishing.com/software/>

French Levelled Readers: Their Efficacy in Measuring Literacy

Stéphanie Leveillé, Laurentian University, Canada
Michèle Minor-Corriveau, Laurentian University, Canada
Ali Reguigui, Laurentian University, Canada
Roxanne Bélanger, Laurentian University, Canada

Abstract: Levelled readers have been employed equivalently in French as they have in English, to measure children's reading comprehension and fluency. Translating and adapting levelled books from one language to another presents many challenges and requires one to take into account not only the number of words per sentence or page, but also linguistic complexity (syllabic structure and complexity, lexical availability and lexical frequency). Though some information has been documented with respect to the criteria used to grade these levelled readers according to vocabulary, punctuation and formatting, no formal validation study has been performed on the French GB+ levelled readers. This study aims to evaluate whether the current and widely used French levelled readers, GB +, published by Chenelière Éducation, are graded according to linguistic complexity.

Keywords: Levelled reading, Syllable, Phonemic Awareness, Linguistics, Lexicometrics, Syllabic Complexity, Linguistic Complexity, Trousse d'évaluation en lecture GB+, Specific Vocabulary, Frequent Words, Transparent Words

Background and Theoretical Framework

Reading allows individuals to access the direct route of spelling thus permitting them to understand a written text. Alphabetic writing systems are used to represent the sounds of spoken words through the use of established symbols (i.e. letters or graphemes). The individual must learn to translate the symbols of a word read in sequence and understand that they correspond to sounds or phonemes (Florence, Bara, Gentaz, Édouard, and Colé 2004).

Letters correspond to spoken units. This is what, according to some studies, is considered the most difficult aspect when learning to read (Bryant, Maclean, Bradley, and Crossland 1989; Juel, Griffith, and Gough 1986; MacDonald and Cornwall 1995; Share, Jorm, Maclean, and Matthews 1984; Stanovich, Cunningham, and Cramer 1984; Tunmer and Nesdale 1985). The individual must first conduct an analysis of the structure of oral language and, therefore, have a good phonological awareness.

Phonological awareness is the ability that allows individuals to understand that words are comprised of phonemes or sounds. The French language is composed of 36 phonemes. These sounds are organized to form all the words of the language. Phonological awareness is the ability to identify phonological and linguistic components to be able to manipulate them operationally (Giasson 1995). Thus, when a person develops a good phonological awareness, he discovers that words are composed of subunits (Giasson 1995).

The acquisition of phonological awareness is of great importance when learning to read. Mélançon and Ziarko's research (2000) confirms that young children who have difficulty with phonological awareness when starting school will have more difficulty acquiring the alphabetic writing system, which will limit their ability to decode words. Consequently, their understanding of the text will be affected and this inability molds poor readers. "Classrooms are full of a wonderful diversity of children; differentiated instruction is needed to read all of them. Many teachers have embraced small-group teaching as a way of effectively teaching the broad range of learners in their classrooms. Because readers engage with texts within their control (with