



INVESTIGATION OF READING TEXTS IN B1 LEVEL IN FRENCH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract

Today, in teaching of French as a foreign language in our country, the appropriate texts must be selected considering the students' vocabulary knowledge, grammar levels, interests and needs in B1 level reading instruction like in other levels, Reading instruction in B1 level, determined by the criteria established by the Common European Framework, can include texts with events mentioned in personal letters, texts about feelings and thoughts and texts with words used frequently in work or daily life. In this study reading texts used in B1 level French language teaching will be exemplified. Literature review will be used in this study. For example, reading texts with the topics such as work life, an article from Le Figaro newspaper, airport security and film review can be used in the reading instruction. The type of questions that can be asked and how the texts can be examined during the teaching of these texts are explained.

Key Words: Teaching French, B1 language level, Reading studies.

INTRODUCTION

French is spoken in 47 countries between all countries worldwide. Approximately 200 millions of citizens know French around the world. 128 millions of people speak French as main or secondary language and it is known and spoken by 72 millions of people in 54 countries. French is spoken in Canada, Belgium, Switzerland, Africa, Luxembourg, and Monaco and especially in France. Besides it is the official language in 29 countries. According to the data of European Union, 129 millions of people in 27 member countries (26% of 497.198.740) and 65 millions of these (12%) speak it as main language and 69 millions of these (14%) speak it as secondary language. According to these data, French is the third most spoken language after English and German inside European Union (tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frans%C4%B1zca, 2013). Because of the reasons counted above, as well as the struggles on globalization in the present time, apart from English, education, teaching and importance of French as foreign language increase rapidly.

Besides, "*Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*" which were approved by "*European Council*" member countries and effective all around the world is taken into attention for foreign language education. Language skills are separated in 5 according to "*CEF Self-Assessment Grid*" (Council of Europe, 2000): i) listening, ii) reading, iii) spoken interaction, iv) spoken production and v) writing.

Besides 6 language levels, which are appropriate according to "*Common European Framework*", are shown on the table below:

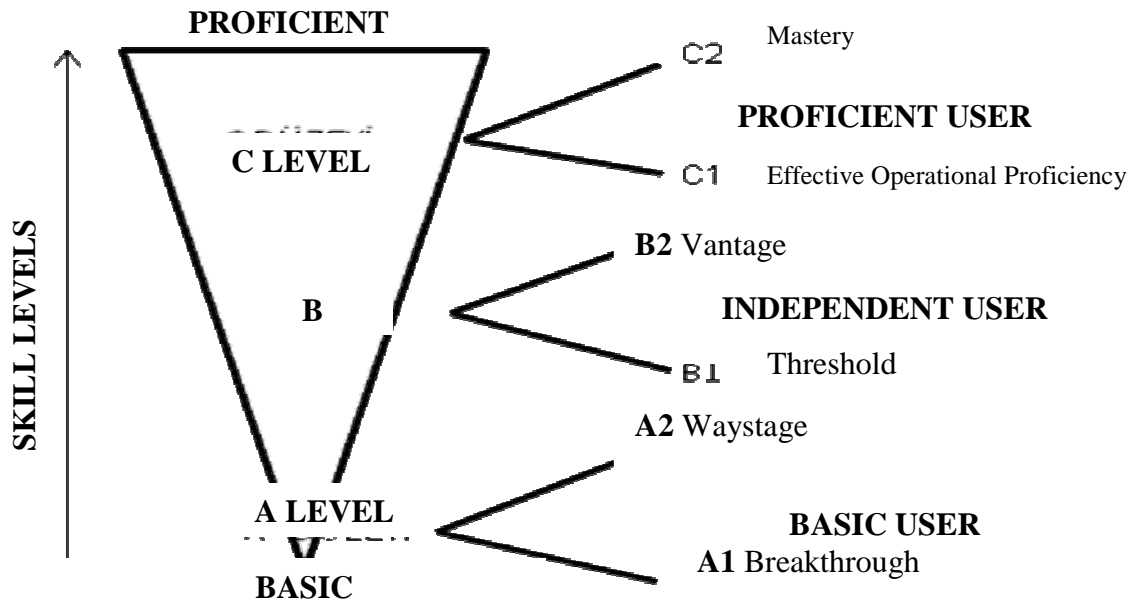


Figure 1: European Language Levels (Little et al., 2001)

As shown on the table above, there are 6 language levels according to “Common European Framework”. A level which is defined as the “Basic User” divides into 2 parts within itself: A1 “Breakthrough Level” and A2 “Waystage Level”. B level which is named as “Independent User” also divides into 2 parts within itself: B1 “Threshold” and B2 “Vantage Level”. And C level which known as “Proficient User” divides into 2 parts: C1 “Effective Operational Level” and C2 “Mastery Level”.

4 main language levels, which take place in foreign language education, are: (i) listening, (ii) reading, (iii) speaking and (iv) writing. Reading skill supports speaking and writing skills’ improvement. The basic on reading studies on foreign language education is that the students understand what they read. The matters to take care of when choosing text for reading activities are vocabulary, grammar level, interest and needs. These gains of students are the subject with reading activities on foreign language education: spelling skills, vocabulary knowledge, grammar information, cultural information.

Studies on the text which contain event, feeling and wishes defined in individual letters or which are occupational or most used in daily life at the reading studies on B1 level which were created by “Common European Framework.” Examples from different texts will be given in this study of “B1 Threshold Level” French language teaching.

Basic Features of B1 Language Level that was determined by Europe Common Language Criteria

B1 level which takes its place between 6 language level that were determined by “Common European Framework” is inside “Independent Users” group (Independent User-Utilisateur Indépendant: B1-B2)). B1 language level is also named as (Threshold, Niveau Seuil). The skills, which are expected from the ones who learn in this language level, are shown on the table below:

Table 1: Expansions of Five Main Language Skills that are expected to be had in B1 Threshold Level

	B1 Threshold Level (Niveau Seuil)
Listening	I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programs on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.
Reading	I can understand texts that consist mainly of high frequency everyday or job-related language. I can understand the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters.
Spoken Interaction	I can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. I can enter unprepared into conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life (e.g. family, hobbies, work, travel and current events)
Spoken Production	I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes and ambitions. I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions.
Writing	I can write simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. I can write personal letters describing experiences and impressions (www.pearsonlongman.com/ae/cef/cefguide.pdf , 2013).

Improving Reading Skills in French Language Teaching

The definition of reading can be given before explaining the reading skill's improving in French language teaching: *"reading is converting various written symbols into verbal symbols by resolving"* (Nunan, 1996, quoted in Yardımoğlu, 2007).

Improvement of reading skill in foreign language education is directly related to the individual's reading habit and sufficiency in his/her own language. The activities to be made before, after and during reading in other foreign language studies are vitally important in French language teaching.

When teaching French as a foreign language, 3 main targets are subject on gaining the students the reading progress (Etienne, 1999):

- 1) The proper articles should be chosen by taking the students' interest and knowledge levels into attention,
- 2) Group studies should be arranged in reading study progress,
- 3) The articles which were processed before on the same subject should be examined as a whole when processing a reading text.

3 different progresses are subject on reading an article in foreign language teaching (Cicurel, 1991):

- 1) Pre-reading contains a target in two ways: directing the knowledge of learners and render them active,
- 2) Reading activity realizes within the target(s) which the teacher suggested. At same time, reading supports different entries to the article,
- 3) The activities after reading allow the learners to give reaction to the article and provide them to connect with their old knowledge.

The activities, to be made before reading in foreign language teaching, can be explained like below (Demirel, 1999):

- Understanding the subject and the main opinion of article from the title of reading text,
- Making interpretations about the people, the environment where the story passes and time by moving from the pictures given together with reading texts,
- General information about the biography and works of the writer of the reading text can be given.

Then the activities, that can be made during reading study in foreign language teaching, like below (Demirel, 1999):

- The reading text is read by the teacher,
- Than some of the students read the same text,

- Spelling mistakes are corrected when necessary,
- The meaning of words are made discovered,
- Grammar knowledge is improved.

As results, the studies, to be made after reading activity in foreign language teaching, are like below (Demirel, 1999):

- Various questions can be asked about subject, environment, time and heroes of the reading text,
- Writing study can be made by moving from the subject of reading text,
- A discussion subject can be produced by moving from the subject of reading text.

METHOD

Literature review method is used in this study. This research give examples using Common European Framework in foreign language teaching . For example this study contain three texts written in B1 Threshold Level. The investigation of these texts are explained in this tudy.

Texts that may be investigated by Reading on B1 Threshold Level

1. Work Life in Company- (Travail en Entreprise)

Work Life in Company- (Travail en Entreprise)	
French Text (Original Text)	English Translation
<p>Joëlle L'année dernière, j'ai fait deux stages en entreprise. D'abord, j'ai travaillé chez un photographe au centre-ville. Je n'aimais pas tellement être vendeuse, mais je devais essayer de vendre toutes sortes d'appareils photo aux clients. Il y avait des modèles à des prix fantastiques! Ce que je préférais, c'étaient les jours où le patron me montrait comment on développe les films. C'était extraordinaire. Bien sûr, comme j'étais la plus jeune, je devais également préparer le café, mais ça c'est normal, je suppose. Enfin, c'était pas mal comme première expérience. Ensuite, j'ai passé sept jours dans une grande surface – un vaste hypermarché en dehors de la ville. D'abord, on m'a fait travailler dans les bureaux. Je répondais aux téléphones, j'appelais des clients pour le patron, j'organisais les fichiers et j'accueillais les clients. Puis j'ai travaillé un peu partout dans les rayons: boulangerie, poissonnerie (oh, que ça piquait!), charcuterie... mais je n'avais pas le droit de travailler dans le rayon alcool! On ne m'a pas permis non plus de travailler à la caisse. Heureusement, parce que les clients n'aiment pas faire la queue et moi je ne suis pas assez rapide (platea.pntic.mec.es/cvera/hotpot/lisons/travail_en_entreprise.htm, 2013).</p>	<p>Joëlle I made two company trainings last year. At first, I worked in a photograph studio in city center. I wouldn't like to be seller but I had to try to sell various photograph machines to customers. There were models with fair price! And the days which I loved most are the ones when my boss taught me how to take photographs. It was great. Of course the duty of preparing the coffee was mine because I was the youngest one but I think that this is normal. After that, I passed my 7 days in a big area- in a quite wide shopping center outside the city. Firstly, I was made work in offices. I answered the calls, called the customers for the boss, edited the files and welcomed customers. After that I worked in different sections everywhere: bakery, fisher, charcuterie... However I didn't have the right to work in alcohol section. Even they did not let me work in cash point. Happily, the customers didn't like to wait in queue and I was not fast enough.</p>

Work Life in Company- (Travail en Entreprise) Questions about the Text	
French Questions	English Questions
Quel est le type du texte?	What is the kind of text?
Séparez ce texte en sous-parties	Separate the text into sections
Enumérez les expériences professionnelles de Joëlle	Put Joëlle's occupational experiences in an order
Quels sont les temps de verbes utilisés dans ce texte?	What are tenses of verbs used in the text?
Quels sont les fonctions des temps du passé dans ce texte?	Why were the verbs conjugated in past tense in the text?

2. The Column Quoted from Le Figaro Newspaper: Airways Security

The Column Quoted from Le Figaro Newspaper: Airways Security	
French Text (Original Text)	English Translation
<p>Depuis le crash des avions suicides aux Etats-Unis, les compagnies aériennes connaissent certains bouleversements. Outre l'application du contrôle renforcé des bagages, elles doivent souvent modifier les calendriers de départ.</p> <p>Attention aux objets interdits. Lors du filtrage, après la vérification des billets et des pièces d'identité, sont détectés tous les objets pouvant devenir une arme: canif, couteau, ciseaux, tournevis, etc...Ils seront confisqués au mieux placés dans une enveloppe et rendus à l'arrivée.</p> <p>Prévoir un seul bagage de cabine. Autre tolérance qui disparaît pour ne pas allonger les temps de fouille, un seul bagage à main est désormais autorisé en cabine.</p> <p>Prévoir une pièce d'identité. Les contrôles d'identité vont devenir plus fréquents, même pour les vols intérieurs européens.</p> <p>Arriver un peu plus tôt à l'aéroport. Consulter sa compagnie pour savoir à quelle heure il convient de se présenter à l'aéroport.</p> <p>La direction d'aéroport de Paris suggère de venir un peu plus tôt que d'habitude, compte tenu des contrôles renforcés.</p> <p>Les compagnies américaines souhaitent que leurs passagers arrivent trois heures avant le décollage.</p> <p>Surveiller ses bagages. A aucun moment, ils ne doivent être laissés sans surveillance.</p> <p>Vacances</p> <p>Après les attentats perpétrés aux Etats-Unis, les touristes changeront certainement leurs prochains plans de voyages. Ils vont rechercher avant tout sécurité et proximité (www.xtec.cat/~sgirona/fle/hotpot/vocabulaire/vocab8.htm, 2013). (Extrait de "Le Figaro")</p>	<p>The airway companies have been disrupted as of the suicide planes landed on USA lands. Going calendars are often changed as well as the luggage control got hard.</p> <p>Attention on forbidden objects. All objects that may be weapon are examined after ticket and identity check: jackknife, scissors, screwdriver etc... These objects are levied at the moment when they arrived at the airport.</p> <p>Only a single cabin luggage is foreseen. Another toleration which is foreseen with the target of not expanding the crowded times allow to put only one hand luggage to the cabin.</p> <p>Identity card is checked. Identity controls are made more often even including Europe domestic flights.</p> <p>One should come early to the airport. How early to come before the flight should be learnt from the airway company.</p> <p>It is suggested to come to Paris Airport earlier than accustomed by taking obliged controls into attention.</p> <p>American companies want the passengers to come to the airport 3 hours before the taking off.</p> <p>One should be careful when carrying luggage. Don't ever leave your luggage when carrying.</p> <p>On holidays</p> <p>The tourists will definitely change their future travel plans after the rape crimes in USA. They will look for security and affinity before everything. (Quoted from Le Figaro)</p>

The Column Quoted from Le Figaro Newspaper: Airways Security	
French Questions	English Questions
Quel est le type du texte?	What is the kind of text?
D'où est tiré ce texte?	Where was the text quoted from?
Quels sont les types de discours dans ce texte Donnez des exemples Justifiez-les	What are the speech kinds used in the text. Give examples. Verify these.
Quels autres objets peuvent être dangereux dans les avions ou dans d'autres transports en commun?	What are the other tools that may be dangerous in planes and other public transport vehicles?
Dans l'avion, aux toilettes, derrière des fauteuils on voit des consignes sous quelle forme?	What kinds of suggestions are placed in the planes, toilets, behind the seats?

3. Movie Revision: Critique de Film

Critique de Film: Movie Revision	
French Text (Original Text)	English Translation
<p>La vache et le président de Philippe Muyl C'est une histoire toute simple, pleine de tendresse et écrite pour les enfants. Les adultes y trouveront cependant leur plaisir. Il est question d'une jeune vache qui vit à l'écart de son troupeau et qui est devenue la compagne de jeux du jeune fils d'un fermier. Le jour où la maladie de la vache folle menace, le vétérinaire décide de l'abattre et l'enfant va tenter de la sauver. Il arrive jusqu'à Paris où il va demander la grâce pour sa protégée au président de la République, d'où le titre du film. Les péripéties de nos héros rendent cette histoire joyeuse et agréable. Le spectateur se laisse prendre au jeu. Le mérite en revient à la manière dont Philippe Muyl mène l'histoire qui nous amuse tout en nous faisant réfléchir (http://www.didieraccord.com/exercices/index.php?ex=2.3.2.7., 2013).</p>	<p>President Philippe Muyl's Cow This story is quite basic and it was written for children. Meanwhile adults will like this movie. In this movie, a cow which is far from its drove and lives together with son of a farmer is shown. This cow gets sick of mad-cow disease one day, veterinary decides to cut it because of its illness and its owner wants to save it. He wants the mayor in Paris to save his cow. The name of film was given like this because of this reason. Cheerful story of the heroes renders the play much more attractive. The audience got quite effected from the play. Ability of Philippe Muyl makes us both think and enjoy.</p>

Critique de Film: Movie Revision	
French Questions	English Questions
Quel est le type du texte?	What is the kind of text?
Quel est l'objectif du cinéaste?	What is the aim of producer?
A qui s'adresse-t-il ce film?	What is the audience of this movie?
Séparez ce texte en sous-parties	Separate the text into sections
Résumez le film	Summarize the movie

CONCLUSION

Primarily these points must be considered on reading studies made in foreign language education (Rost, 1993, quoted in Alderson, 2001):

- 1) Interest and needs of students (which subjects they are interested in),
- 2) Students' levels in foreign language (beginning, intermediate, advanced),
- 3) Students' history (for example vocabulary knowledge and grammar),
- 4) Length of text,
- 5) How the text will be processed with the students.



As shown in the text, “who?”; “where?”; “when?” questions which test if the text is generally understood can be asked when processing reading texts on B1 language level in French education. After that, many questions, which are shown if the reading text is understood with details, can be asked.

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