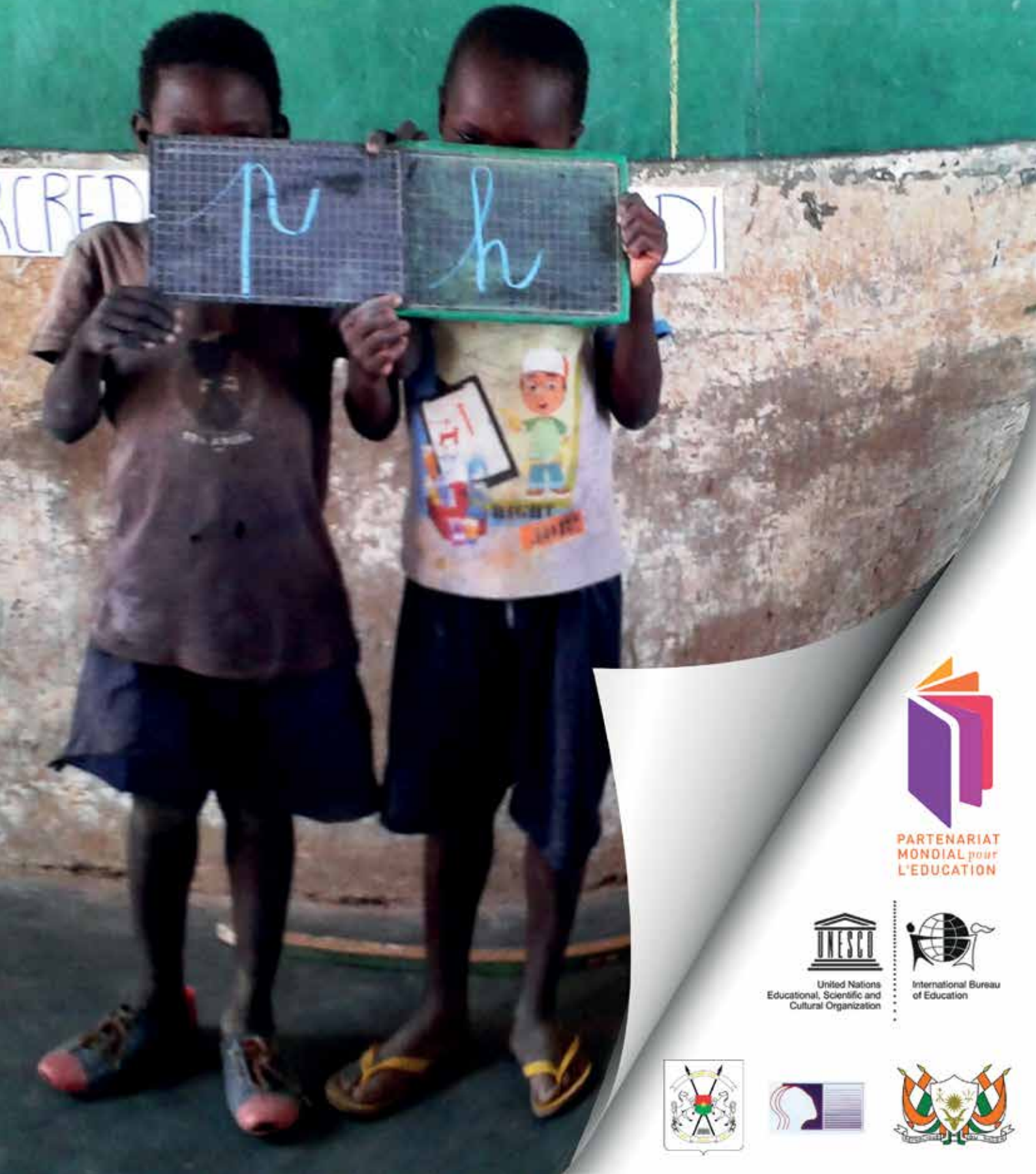# TEACHING AND LEARNING TO READ
IN A MULTILINGUAL CONTEXT

Ways forward for three sub-Saharan African countries (Burkina Faso, Niger, Senegal)

PARTENARIAT MONDIAL pour L'EDUCATION

UNESCO
United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

International Bureau
of Education

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FOREWORD

In the global context, never before has the focus on the quality of education and learning, equity of that quality, and the relevance of education and learning to holistic, inclusive, and sustainable development been so strong. These parameters -relevance, quality, equity of quality, and sustainability- are enshrined in SDG 4. Despite this forceful drive, the world is moving forward with the legacy of the Education for All (EFA) agenda that notably expanded access to education but failed to commensurately deepen quality and relevance. The 2014 UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report stated that 250 million children are unable to read, write, or do basic mathematics, and 130 million of those children had been in primary education. In order for education systems to become more effective and efficient, many elements have to fit together coherently for learning to occur: a national vision, leadership at all levels of education systems, curriculum design, development and implementation, teachers, teaching, learning, assessment, financing, and more.

As an essential component of the education system, curriculum is indispensable for giving effect to the key parameters of SDG 4. It is not possible to attain relevance in education without a clear articulation of what should learners learn and why they should learn it. Curriculum therefore addresses the "what" and "why" of education. It goes further: guiding how students should learn intended competencies (teaching and learning) and how to verify that students have learned them (assessment). Curriculum is, therefore, vital for guiding required improvements in teaching, learning, assessment, and learning outcomes; and to ensure curriculum's desired impact, educators need to effectively implement it.

However, because curriculum relates to practically all elements of an education system, failures in those elements can undermine what may otherwise be an excellent curriculum. Well-functioning education systems are, therefore, critical enablers of curriculum implementation and the expected learning outcomes. As a Center of Excellence for Curriculum and related matters, the IBE is strategically positioned to contribute to UNESCO-wide efforts to support Member States' attainment of SDG 4 targets, as well as of other SDGs that depend on quality, equity, and relevance of education and learning for their success.

The complexity of curriculum development processes and the range of issues informing the "what" and the "how" of teaching and learning are major challenges for decision makers and curriculum developers. This is particularly true in this twenty-first century, characterized by the fast pace of change and the constant demand to balance current relevance with future relevance. Since curriculum development is influenced by local needs as well as by broader, transnational trends and models, it is critical that we gain a comprehensive international perspective on curriculum issues, trends, and approaches. National teams and professionals leading curriculum reform and revision need to have a broad range of relevant curriculum-related information, knowledge, experience, and expertise to effectively develop and implement quality curricula. IBE brings this very specific expertise and support to the Member States and contributes to all of SDG 4, from ECCE to higher education, as well as to SDGs 5, 11, and 16.

In November 2013, the IBE-UNESCO and the ministries of education of Burkina Faso, Niger, and Senegal, with sponsorship from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), launched a 39-month initiative, "Improving learning outcomes in early grade reading: Integration of curriculum, teaching, learning materials, and assessment".

The project, in line with larger national curricular reforms (launched in Senegal in 2008; in Niger and Burkina Faso in 2016), was conceived in two phases: a national and international diagnostic study that would enable the formulation of country-specific recommendations; then curriculum development and capacity-building tools and activities in each country that would build on these orientations.

Experts conducted a diagnostic study between October 2013 and December 2014. The IBE-coordinated international and local team of experts had a two-fold mission: identify the latest research findings in the area of early reading education internationally, and analyze both the national reading curriculum and the classroom teaching practices within each country. The results of this unprecedented study are released in this seminal research report titled: "Teaching and learning to read in a multilingual context: Ways forward for three sub-Saharan countries (Burkina Faso, Niger, Senegal)".

The first part of the report consists of a comparative study of the latest theoretical and practical insights in the area of early reading education internationally, with a focus on contexts of second-language reading instruction, in which language and reading acquisition are supposed to take place simultaneously.

The second part of the report entails a thorough analysis of existing curriculum documents and teaching practices in Burkina Faso, Niger, and Senegal. Experts assessed official guidelines, syllabi, and textbooks for grades 1 to 3 (200 in total), paying specific attention to the prescriptiveness and detail characterizing curricular and pedagogical material as regards early reading instruction. They evaluated the alignment between official frameworks and learning materials, teacher training, and assessment methods. They also conducted classroom observations (36), along with focus group / individual interviews with teachers and school principals (110). This double focus (document analysis / observations and interviews) allowed the report to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of each national reading curriculum in both their practical and theoretical aspects. As a whole, the report identifies the elements required for successful early literacy acquisition, provides state-of-the-art knowledge on effective reading curricula and related curriculum issues, and formulates both general and tailored evidence-based recommendations.

Ministries of education officials, curriculum developers, supervisors, education researchers, and school staff in Burkina Faso, Niger, and Senegal were meant to be the primary users and beneficiaries of the findings. Nevertheless, the IBE and its partners believe that this report -as well as the other project products and findings- contribute to increasing the understanding of what is and is not working in regard to early reading curriculum development and reforms and therefore can be helpful beyond the three national contexts and education systems at stake.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..

GLOSSARY

Alphabet. The term alphabet designates a system of graphic symbols (letters) arranged according to a conventional order and used to transcribe the phonemes of a language.

Oral code, written code. These terms refer to the phonic or graphic components of a language, which to a large extent have developed arbitrarily. They are governed by conventions that evolve over time and establish new norms. The code is understood by studying the correspondence between phonemes and graphemes and vice versa.

Blending. Blending is the activity of combing graphemes with each other to form syllables and then words with the aim of identifying them.

Curriculum. In the simplest terms, 'curriculum' is a description of what, why, how and how well students should learn in a systematic and intentional way. The curriculum is not an end in itself but rather a means to fostering quality learning. The term curriculum has many definitions, ranging from a planned 'course of study' to an all-embracing view that includes all the learning experiences for which the school is responsible. Some examples of definitions: "The curriculum is a plan incorporating a structured series of intended learning outcomes and associated learning experiences, generally organized as a related combination or series of courses."(*Australian Thesaurus of Education Descriptor*s). The curriculum is the "inventory of activities implemented to design, organize and plan an education or training action, including definition of learning objectives, content, methods (including assessment) and material, as well as arrangements for training teachers and trainers." (*CEDEFOP 2011*). "A curriculum is a plan for learning." (*Taba 1962*). "The curriculum defines the educational foundations and contents, their sequencing in relation to the amount of time available for the learning experiences, the characteristics of the teaching institutions, the characteristics of the learning experiences, in particular from the point of view of methods to be used, the resources for learning and teaching (e.g. textbooks and new technologies), evaluation and teachers' profiles." (*Braslavsky 2003*).

Curricular alignment. This concept is used as a benchmark test when analysing the quality of education systems: it involves measuring gaps or continuities in a curriculum in terms of its stated educational goals, official recommendations, the teaching and assessment methods it implements, and actual teaching practices.
A high-quality education system should aim to achieve alignment between these different components.

Comprehension of the alphabetic principle. This concept is used to identify the knowledge of writing children have constructed. Children understand the alphabetic principle when they have understood that a word is made up of sound units that can be segmented, when they understand through regular contact with writing that text is divided into words separated by blank spaces, and when, in their spontaneous acts of producing writing, conventional, standardized and recognizable forms replace pseudo-letters and other symbols. Attention can then be directed to identifying smaller units, namely graphemes and examining how they relate to phonemes.

Child-to-adult dictation. Child-to-adult dictation is a way of having emergent readers produce a text when they cannot yet write it by themselves. The method is based on letting the child state what he or she wants to write and then formulate and dictate sentences to the adult, who knows how to read and write. Detached from the material problems of handwriting and spelling, the child can discover the constraints specific to writing, those of a text, and the differences with the constraints of oral language.

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Digraph. In linguistics, a digraph is an assembly of two characters (usually two letters in an alphabet), not counting diacritical marks, to form a single grapheme, and thus represent a single phoneme. In the case where three characters are combined, we speak of a trigraph. The term monograph is used if a grapheme is made up of a single character.

Bilingual education. Bilingual education refers to the use of two languages in the formal education system. It does not automatically include a local language. The most common type of bilingual education attempts in one way or another to use the language spoken by students in the school programme.

Grapheme. The grapheme is the graphic transcription of a phoneme. The grapheme is the smallest distinctive or significant unit of the written sequence, composed of a letter, a group of letters, an accented letter or a letter with an auxiliary diacritical mark that corresponds to a phonic or semic unit in the spoken sequence. The number of graphemes that correspond to the same phoneme varies in relation to the languages' orthography. For so-called non-transparent languages (see below), there is a lot of variety, i.e. in these languages, there are many ways of writing a phoneme.

Word identification. Word identification refers to the process by which readers associate a written word they are looking at with a meaning. For identification to occur, the language must be more or less known and a meaning of the word must have been memorized. It is considered that two paths are used in word identification: the direct path and the indirect path. The direct path is based on the orthographic image of the word, as the reader has memorized it. He or she recognizes it instantly thanks to a very rapid perception of the letters composing it. The use of the indirect path, by deciphering, is no longer necessary. The indirect path designates the process by which the reader converts a written word into an oral word. The reader must identify the letters that make up the word, treat them as graphemes by matching them with phonemes, and then combine them to reconstruct the acoustic image of the word.

First language (L 1). First language refers to the official language of the state and the language used by the majority of the population. It is in principle the language of instruction in the education system.

Mother tongue. The term mother-tongue, while widely used, has different meanings. It often defines the first language(s) that a person learned in his or her family environment. It also refers to the language(s) with which we identify or which others consider to be our native tongue(s). The term may refer to the language we know best and use most often. Mother tongue can also be referred to as the primary or first language.

Foreign language. A foreign language is a language taught in a school system without being practised outside the school, by the majority of a country's population.

Second language (L 2). A second language is a language used in schooling. It is used as a language of instruction from the start of schooling or from a given level. A second language is more precisely a language that is specific to school, that which makes it possible to undergo schooling. It is often not the language spoken by those attending school. They must learn it.

"Opaque" or non-transparent language. An opaque language is a language in which the correspondence between phonemes and graphemes is very variable. English is considered to be highly transparent or orthographically opaque. For instance, the letter sequence *ough* can be pronounced in a dozen different ways. Learning to read is considered more difficult in an opaque language.

Transparent language. A perfectly transparent language is a language in which the correspondence between graphemes and phonemes is univocal: and only one grapheme corresponds to a phoneme, and vice versa. Such a language is said to be orthographically transparent. For instance, Serbian and Croatian are considered to be languages with transparent orthography (they have no silent letters for example). Conversely, French is moderately transparent: a single phoneme, for example o, can be transcribed by multiple graphemes (*o, au, eau, ot, etc.*), and there are many cases of silent letters.

National language. A national language is a language considered to be specific to a region, nation or country. The exact definition varies from country to country. In some countries, a language may have the status of a national language recognized by the government or by law. In the field of education, a language is often designated as 'national' in the case where it's written system has been codified and can be used to teach deciphering in the language spoken by native speakers.

Official language. Official languages are generally languages used by the government or in texts, whereas national languages are generally oral and vehicular languages.

Letter. The letter is a graphic unit of the alphabet.

Morpheme. The morpheme is the smallest meaningful unit structuring a word. A distinction is made between *lexical morphemes* and *grammatical morphemes*. To form another word, lexical morphemes attach affixes to a base, for example the affixes -ist or -al or -ition can be attached to the base *dent*, or two bases can be compounded, for example the word homework. *Grammatical morphemes* are composed of distinct meaningful forms that are added to a noun, an adjective, or a verb. They mark differences of person, gender and number and, for verbs, of person, time and manner.

Morphological awareness. Morphological awareness is the ability to perceive the role of certain letters or groups of letters as forms that convey meaning.

Phoneme. The concept of phoneme designates the smallest distinctive unit of spoken language; smallest, because it cannot be segmented into smaller units, and distinctive, in that it produces a change of meaning by commutation. To put it differently, replacing one phoneme with another modifies the semantic structure, for example with /bark/ and /dark/.

Phonological awareness. Phonological awareness is the ability to perceive, segment and manipulate the sound units of language such as syllables, phonemes and the repetition of sounds. Developing awareness of phonological units and learning the correspondences between orthographic and phonological units are essential steps in learning to read and write.

GLOSSARY

Didactic progression. In didactics, at the level of the prescribed curriculum, progression can refer to any official planning of teaching content in relation to a given temporal order for part or whole of a teaching system. The progression may be more or less selective. At the level of classroom instruction, it defines the order in which concepts are introduced and the sequences successively carried out to establish a pathway in the learning process. Progression sets apro-gramme that chronologically distributes sequences and sessions in the school calendar while taking its constraints into account.

Text. A text is a meaningful, finite linguistic sequence produced in a communication situation that involves several speakers and is attached to a medium. A text is also defined as a discursive formation, a text genre or a speech genre.

Text or speech genre. Texts or speech genres are oral or written enunciations used by speakers. These enunciations have a typical and relatively stable form in how they are structured. In principle, speakers who are acculturated to literacy can draw on a wide repertoire of text genres or oral and written speech. Genres are used practice, but it is possible to ignore their existence, like Monsieur Jourdain in Molière's Bourgeois Gentilhomme, who is delighted to learn he has been speaking prose without knowing he was doing so. Bakhtin was responsible for widely popularizing the notion of speech genre. As he put it, "If speech genres did not exist and if we did not master them but had to create them for the first time in the process of speaking and we had to construct each one of our statements, verbal exchange would be virtually impossible" (1979, p. 285).

Formal oral text genres. Formal oral genres refer to a set of oral text genres such as a presentation, a public lecture, a televised debate, storytelling, a job interview, etc., which are produced in public communication situations. The term formal oral text genre serves to define textual forms that exist empirically and that are used in education or in public life. This term serves to define oral language from a communicative perspective as an object of teaching and learning. To teach oral language or, in other words, how to communicate orally in L1, school does not emphasize communication forms used in private life, which it leaves to family education and everyday situations. Instead, it focuses on teaching of oral genres that are used for school learning and engagement with public life.

Text type. A text type is an abstract model, constructed by a linguist and characterized by linguistic features that distinguish it from other types of text. Text type can be defined as argumentative, descriptive, explanatory, injunctive, narrative, poetic, dialogued-based, etc.

INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of the diagnostic study conducted between October 2013 and December 2014, as part of an ambitious capacity-building project targeting the increase of children's literacy levels across three West African countries. The project "Improving Learning Outcomes in Early Grade Reading: Integration of Curriculum, Teaching, Learning Materials and Assessment (Burkina Faso, Niger, Senegal; 2013-2017)" was coordinated by the International Bureau of Education (IBE-UNESCO) and sponsored by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE).

In keeping with the project objectives of quality early reading education, this report takes stock of two complimentary research assignments: an international study of reading instruction and the curricula used for this purpose, especially in a second language; and an analysis of teaching practices in the three countries. The report is divided in three parts.

The first part contains four chapters that examine reading instruction methods and their main outcomes. In order, these chapters describe teaching conditions in a multilingual context, analyse the impact of methods and context on how writing is introduced during the first three years of primary education, define some practical didactic constraints and broadly examine the issue of curricular alignment. The last of these chapters, which emphasizes the question of progression, also sets out the approach adopted for the remainder of the report.

The second part analyses official documents, programmes and textbooks in the three above-mentioned countries, devoting a chapter to each country.

The third part examines the practices observed in a number of classes across the three countries, chosen in relation to several parameters: education level, language of instruction, etc. It also contains three chapters.

The conclusions and recommendations of this report have been used by the three countries to develop national action plans to improve reading, namely the implementation of phase two of the project.

part 1

SOME REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
drawn from the international literature

CHAPTER **1**

WHAT DOES LEARNING TO READ ENTAIL?
READING INSTRUCTION METHODS RECOMMENDED BY
INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH

Reading instruction methods are often closely tied to the booklets or exercise books that are used in teaching. The term method, as it is used here, takes on another meaning. It defines a set of rules and normative principles serving as the foundation for the teaching of a particular skill - reading in this case. The method is based on theoretical principles and teaching processes that are defined as the outcome of a didactic transposition (Chevallard, 1985, 1991). This outcome is a heterogeneous and complex didactic construction. It stands at the intersection of a diverse body of knowledge (language sciences, teacher training, knowledge about teaching practices and learners, disciplinary didactics and, especially, didactics of the language of instruction and reading) and the expectations explicitly stated in the official documents of a national education system (social, political and institutional expectations and aspirations).

Constantly challenged and driven forward by research and government-set targets; reading methods are closely associated with the history of education and schooling, as determined nationally and internationally. Like all teaching methods or procedures, reading methods can be analysed at different levels as illustrated by the four introductory chapters of this report. This chapter looks at the fundamental components involved in reading instruction, as they are identified by the scientific community and the different methods currently being discussed by the latter, taking account of how they work in practice and their efficiency. This overview will draw on contributions from the fields of linguistics, psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics and will, of course, be supplemented with references to empirical (didactic) studies.

1. RECENT THINKING ON READING INSTRUCTION: THE FUNDAMENTAL COMPONENTS

ACCESS TO WRITTEN CULTURE

Recent thinking on the teaching of reading has been largely influenced by the concept of *written culture*, which is used to analyse the access students have to cultural objects and practices of writing. This access determines the relationship that students build with written texts and the world of formal education. The diversity of cultural objects to be taken into account is immense, if considered from the point of view of literacy: books, newspapers, libraries, digital media, children's literature, and all writing in the urban, domestic and school spheres (Chartier et al., 1997). These objects belong to practices that children/students encounter in their environment, and with which they can become familiar and identify. A familiarity with certain forms of literacy may explain unexpected academic successes (Lahire, 1993, 1995). The concept of literacy is used here to identify the various contexts in which texts and other forms of representing knowledge are employed. This concept therefore encompasses more than just the ability to read and write (Sales Cordeiro et al., 2011, p. 6). At present, researchers do not hesitate to speak of *literacies* in the plural. On the one hand, this emphasizes the specificities of diverse sociocultural contexts (including family, school, leisure, church and the workplace) that are decisive in practices of acculturation to writing (Grossmann, 1999; Kleiman, 1998). On the other, it underlines the impact of digital communication and information technologies on the production and reception of texts, processes that consequently involve the interactive use of different semiotic means (i.e. static or dynamic images, sounds, etc.; Kress, 2003; Moita-Lopes and Rojo, 2004). From this perspective, literacy encompasses everything to do with the culture of writing, as well as oral practices, in its formal variations. It highlights the relationship that learners can construct with their experience of the semiotic resources

present in their environment. This relationship certainly plays a key role in helping them understand the diversity of situations and functions of writing, as well as in motivating them to tackle the formal exercise of learning to write. Furthermore, understanding writing fosters students' familiarity with different types of formal texts.

Within this broad framework, the concept of written culture - developed didactically in France by Gérard Chauveau, Eliane Rogovas-Chauveau and Jacques Bernardin in particular - (1) implies a renewal of content and teaching methods not limited to reading and writing, (2) but takes into account the conceptions that students can construct, regarding the uses of writing and texts in their environment : (3) this turns the focus back on the activities the students do, as the latter are confronted with learning situations with clear cognitive implications.

1. Initiating students into written culture involves renewing educational content in a way that is not limited to learning to read and write. The goal is to attain a reflective, conscious and explicit proficiency, that makes language the focus of learning and no longer considers reading and writing simply as tools or unfamiliar practices. Providing access to written culture changes the relationship to language and the world. 'A general attitude of this kind to language or other practices seems to go hand in hand not only with the progressive construction of knowledge, but also, and especially with, the development of a relationship to knowledge in which the world and experience can be constructed as objects of knowledge, and the self as a knowledgeable subject' (Rochex, 1997, p. 12). In this sense, the status of learning a second language clearly implies specific strategies and teaching methods.

2. Initiating students into written culture means being attentive to what students, and their parents, have to say about reading and writing, and how these skills are learned. In fact, the appropriation of writing plays a role in a person's self-development and the redefinition of his or her place in the family (see studies by Charlot et al., 1992; Charlot, 1999, or Lahire, 1993 for primary school). The cognitive development linked to the initiation into written culture is inseparable from emotional development. It therefore follows that the aim is to create schools in which students can 'experience knowledge as a human adventure', as Jacques Bernardin puts it, an adventure that exists in dialogue with the history of mankind. One may consider that a maximum number of students will be able to benefit from learning that focuses on culturally specific techniques, meanings and works, proposed at school and by the school, all the more so when such learning proves to be substantive and meaningful. Field studies conducted in Africa show that 'traditional modes of knowledge transmission usually differ strongly from those at school' (Maurer, 2011, p. 227), however, it is important that this situation does not entail a 'ruralization of school' (Doumbia, 2001, p. 190) that fails to fulfil the basic tasks of education. Instead, school must act as a protected space for study, all the while seeking to articulate the content it teaches to cultural contexts. The Education for All movement, inaugurated in 1990 by the World Conference in Jomtien, places the basic education of children, young people and adults at the centre of the international community's commitments. In April 2000, the World Education Forum on Education for All in Dakar renewed and strengthened these commitments, identifying six objectives defined as follows: (1) Early childhood protection and education; (2) Primary education for all; (3) Learning for young people and adults; (4) Literacy; (5) Gender parity; (6) Quality (ADEA, 2006, pp. 6-7).

3. The attention paid to student activity in the early stages of learning to read and write has, in turn, prompted a closer examination of potential exercise situations and instructions to stimulate 'effective cognitive activity and intellectual exchange on the targeted learning content' (Rochex, 1997, p. 11) among students. Multiplying tasks

without any real content is no guarantee of learning. It is therefore important for the teacher to encourage reflection and discussion, and to solicit explanation or justification. This kind of approach involves assessing not only students' performances but also their representations of reading and its uses, and how it is learned from the class's point of view, but also from that of individual students. In France, Jacques Bernardin's research on the relationship students develop to writing has yielded two differentiated ideal types. First, that of active-researcher students, who have strongly grounded motivations to learn. For these students, schooling is part of a process whose end goal is autonomy, personal development and opening up to the world when their learning is completed and they are ready to take their place in society. Second, that of passive-receiver students, who struggle to justify their presence in school and for whom learning essentially means 'listening to the teacher and then repeating and redoing' (Bernardin, 1997, pp. 25-27).

Authors of studies on the initiation into written culture also list concrete proposals. For example, Bernardin (2013) states that 'from nursery school, curiosity and the desire to learn can be sustained and developed by reading a variety of books, both fiction and non-fiction, but also by exploring writing in the plurality of its functions.' The idea here is to support the learning project by multiplying contact with books, frequent library use, attention to written materials and their uses in society. However, Bernardin warns that it 'is less the "immersion in writing" that counts than the quality of the discussions used to build comprehension, in particular comprehension of long stories, which some children are initiated to very early and others not.' He considers that values, such as attributing meaning to students' exercises, coupled with functional activities presented as ways of resolving problems, and a process of knowledge construction based on cooperation with peers, may also support academic success by fostering a sense of shared success.

This approach to written culture draws attention to the fact that an overemphasis on teaching the code and unit combinations, can overshadow the importance of comprehension and the need, when reading, to construct a coherent and relevant meaning. The various approaches to initiating students into written culture therefore seek to overcome this risk, of misunderstanding the requirements and aims of the reading activity (Goigoux, 2000). Considered in this light, it is important to not limit the teaching to work on words and infralexical units, where the implicit assumption is that it suffices to decode all the words in a text to understand it at the expense of the connections and inferences involved in the construction of meaning in a text.

2. UNDERSTANDING WRITING, UNDERSTANDING TEXTS

For a long time in compulsory schooling, students were taught through regular contact with value-loaded texts. In the tradition of the classic educational model, children would memorize these texts, selected for their suitability to transmit cultural heritage and to provide moral edification (Chartier, 2007). Today, the reading of texts responds to a broader set of objectives. Students must understand texts in their diversity in order to know how to act appropriately in their environment. This shift in focus adds a modernity to the choice of texts used to teach. This choice changes over time, and the texts vary in relation to the stages and cycles of education. What writings or texts are presented to students when they start learning to read? Do these writings or texts adhere to the classic model? Are they geared towards learning a standard language and understanding the literal meaning of the text? Or are they chosen and presented in a communicative perspective, consistent with the most recent educational aims and objectives? To answer these questions, it is necessary to first define both the classic approach and the communicative approach.

The classic approach represents a paradigm – defined as *logical-grammatical* by Rastier (2001) – where the goal is to grasp meaning, inherent to the text and that assumes to express the author's intention. In this approach, the student is initiated to the ideas the author develops in the text, by perceiving the organization of sentences and the meaning of words. Elucidation of the meaning of sentences and words, is based on the assumption that language reflects the world as it is. This assumption in turn induces a specific method: meaning is elucidated by proceeding from local to global. More specifically, first the student learns the different meanings of a word, and then the given sentence is rendered intelligible thanks to the student's understanding of the rules that govern it. Finally, the student acquires the meaning of the text. When teaching reading comprehension, the logical-grammatical approach consists of using reading materials composed of excerpts, selected passages or sentences. These excerpts are considered to be representative of an author's work and the quality of his or her writing. They are characterized by a standardized language that serves as a model to be known and reproduced, and they exemplify the moral and universal values that define citizens' ways of thinking and speaking. These materials are used to work on reading fluency, expressive or silent reading exercises, and later in the school curriculum, textual analysis. The classic paradigm tends to separate deciphering from comprehension, because identifying words and reading sentences are considered as preparation for textual comprehension. However, when the teacher reads aloud to the class there is already a form of textual comprehension at work, from the earliest stage of reading instruction. This comprehension is focused on educational goals and instruction, through texts charged with values that are considered worthy material for schoolwork.

The overhaul in the teaching of French that occurred from the 1960s-1970s adheres to a communicative approach to language and reading, in line with youth education projects. Where the construction of meaning is concerned, the emphasis shifts to readers, who make links between their reading project, the textual infrastructure (the different parts or levels of the text), textualization (the linguistic units from which it is composed) and the context in which the text is produced (the speaker, the receiver and the purpose of the text). Therefore, the construction of meaning is organized from the global (the reader's project and the context of production) to the local. This search for meaning engages the reader in an inferential and interpretive process. In the communicative approach, two conceptions of reading comprehension work together in a continuum: (1) an inferential model in which reading is considered to be a problem-solving activity; (2) an interpretative model based on the teaching of text genres.

1. The inferential reading model is based on the contributions of cognitive psychology and textual grammar, through the new school educational movement. Drawing on the research of Kintsch and Van Dijk (1975) and Miller and Kintsch (1980), reading is theorized as an act of processing information during which a number of macro rules (generalization, deletion, integration and construction), serve to facilitate memorization. This conception of text processing, centred on the interaction between the reader and the text, is summarized as follows by Denhière (1984): 'The idea that the reader/listener constructs and memorizes is a representation of what is said by the text and not a representation of the text itself' (p. 21). It should be stressed that this conception favours the semantic component of the text to the detriment of its specific characteristics. In this inferential model, reading is conceived as a problem-solving activity. Reading is described as a logical operation, inference [1], whereby a person 'assigns meaning to one or several written configurations based on information previously acquired (other meanings, contextual information, intuitive knowledge of certain functions of language)' (p. 1). The variety and diversity of

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1- Inference can be defined as a logical operation that consists of accepting a proposition by virtue of its association with other propositions already held to be true.

reading functions are what enable the reader to grasp textual variety and diversity (whether reading a fragment of text, a one-line slogan for an advertisement poster, or a novel). Writing can be used to support the teaching of reading, but it is not considered a necessary component. Student progress is conceived, essentially, in terms of reading projects of varying scales, changes in reading situations, but also in reading speeds. This model was further developed by Giasson (1990), who emphasizes the need for a reflexive approach to reading instruction that also draws on the metacognitive analysis of the reader's strategies. Readers must be capable of self-checking their comprehension (Goigoux, 2003). Experimental psycho linguistic research shows that the reader's self-assessment of comprehension, knowledge of text structure and ability to make inferences (Cain and Oakhill, 2011) are good predictors of textual comprehension. The reader's oral vocabulary is also a factor. It comes into play when learning to decode but also in understanding the text. According to the longitudinal study conducted by Verhoeven et al., (2011), vocabulary more strongly influences comprehension than decoding abilities.

2. The interpretative reading model refers to the theory of language activity developed by Bronckart (1996) and Dolz and Schneuwly (2009). In this second model, reading instruction is organized from the text entity, named *text genre*. This entity is considered to be a 'verbal production unit that is situated, finite and self-sufficient (from the action or communication perspective)' (Bronckart, 1996, p. 78). The model is based on the assumption that a broad knowledge of the diversity of textual genres and language variations, favours the development of readers' expectations, and boosts their ability to formulate interpretative hypotheses. This then becomes more relevant, flexible and adapted to the specificity of textual genres, thanks to knowledge of the latter. It should be noted that interpretative reading is not limited to literary genres. For example, when readers assess the scope of a document and the relevance of the information it contains, and then, integrate the information into their own knowledge so that it serves a personal purpose relating to the situation at hand, it is an inherently interpretive operation. In the interpretive process, this model prioritizes going back to the text (Revaz and Thévenaz, 2003). Readers rely on the text and more precisely on the words in the text to construct, validate and refine their understanding. This is the case, for example, in instructional strategies such as reading circles (Terwagne et al., 2001), in which small groups of students interpret texts together.

The teaching of comprehension is epitomized in the practice of having students do silent reading independently, as illustrated by homework reading assignments. This is a generalized practice at all levels of instruction, yet this form of reading poses a dilemma (Chartier, 2007): how can the teacher be sure that the students actually do the reading and understand it? Silent reading therefore requires follow-up with comprehension assessment methods, such as oral or written questionnaires, or the analysis of excerpts, renewed through strategies such as reading circles, as mentioned above.

FORMAL ORAL LANGUAGE IN THE INITIATION TO WRITTEN CULTURE

Up to the 1960s, students' *speech* was taken into account at school with two objectives in mind; first, to teach students, both French and non-French speakers, to comply with the standards of written French, and second, to have students use speech to learn and recite their lessons (Dolz and Schneuwly, 1998; Marchand, 1971). The shift to communication in the 1960s-1970s led to a new focus on oral language in schooling. Oral expression was henceforth treated as a language activity that could be learned in a range of situations. With

this in mind, from the early stages of schooling, the aim was to deepen and broaden the means of oral expression acquired in the family context. This approach participated in a continuum between oral and written language that rests on two main strategies. The first consists of working on formal public oral genres and the second is based on the motivational power of doing shared readings aloud, incorporating students into a community of readers at an early age.

From the perspective of text genres (Dolz and Schneuwly, 1998), three goals are assigned to the work on oral language: (1) achieving proficient knowledge of the main kinds of public documents; (2) building a conscious and proactive relationship to one's own linguistic behaviour; and (3) developing a representation of language activity in complex situations (p. 20). This approach implies that the oral or written text is considered as the basis of instruction (Bronckart, 1997, p. 378). Approached in this way, a text that communicates properly is not a set of unconnected sentences but is perceived as a whole. An example is provided by the oral presentation a teacher makes about the life of the bee. The verbal and paraverbal components (the speaker's posture, gestures, voice, intonation, use of images and notes) can be related to the particular characteristics of the communication situation, i.e. the desire to transmit knowledge about the bee to a group of students. The content and organization of the presentation, the progression of themes, the linguistic marking of the text, the specific vocabulary used and the speaker's strategies may be situated and justified throughout the text in order to prepare the act of speaking in a situation of this kind. This is an approach based on the concept of genres, in which genres are recognized by the members of a cultural community. Where the teaching of reading is concerned, genres constitute stable benchmarks for students to circumscribe the formal and ritual aspects of language practices. Since the role of school is primarily to educate, the emphasis is placed on formal and public genres in oral and written language instruction, such as storytelling, presentations, interviews, etc. These genres involve a regulation of language and often anticipation, and therefore preparation that must be approached in terms of a continuum between oral language and writing.

When initiating children into written culture, it is fundamental to familiarize them with all kinds of texts and books. This means that before children are capable of, or know how to, read alone, they can already benefit from listening to the teacher read aloud, or similarly any adult with whom they share a moment of reading in a language they know. In these situations of shared reading aloud with an adult, the communicative function of writing is clearly demonstrated to students (we read for entertainment, we read to learn and we read to understand what to do in a given situation). This communicative function is what arouses and sustains children's interest in written language as a meaningful object. It is what makes them want to read, write and ask questions. Sharing the experience of reading aloud encourages the development of the child's aptitude to understand texts in their diversity. It has been demonstrated in fact that initial oral comprehension in early schooling strongly contributes to written comprehension when children begin learning to read (Verhoeven and Van Leewe, 2008) and that children who have a large vocabulary, built up through linguistic interactions with varied media, are better able to listen and work on phonemes, and consequently progress faster than their peers. This means leaving room for texts and books to be read aloud by the teacher, from the earliest stages in reading instruction and in a language understood by the students. The aim here is communicative: to share readings and to discuss these shared readings.

EARLY WRITING AND THE PRODUCTION OF TEXTS

Over the last twenty years, building on studies in the field of writing, particularly those of Ferreiro, the research

conducted by Rieben's team at the University of Geneva has defined an early literacy project centred on written production. The focus on this area reflects the importance attributed to written language throughout schooling, in light of the fact that difficulties experienced during the first contact with reading and writing are often a precursor to failures in later schooling. In this context, work on writing exercises in complex situations has provided a starting point for research on production phases (Aubertet et al., 1985), improvement (Foglia et al. 1986) and copying (Köhler-Bétrix et al.,1986) in reading and writing. These studies all emphasize how writing contributes to the awareness of linguistic units (letter, word, and phoneme-grapheme correspondence).

Whereas research has often focused on either reading or writing while ignoring their interaction, the model developed by Rieben highlights the existence of individual differences in the reading methods used by children, such as deciphering, whole word memorization and the use of context. In line with studies that have shown that children do not use one single method but various strategies to achieve a meaningful reading (Brenna, 1995), this model has resulted in the term 'strategy' being understood as involving the use of several approaches (Rieben et al., 1989, Rieben 1989, Rieben and Saada-Robert, 1991) in word identification. These strategies draw on knowledge of the code and segmental awareness, and are guided by contextual clues based on textual comprehension, visual similarities between words, graphophonemic or syllabic clues, and, lastly, by instant word recognition, which can be attributed to spelling skills. This would suggest that having good phonological awareness may not guarantee the ability to use it. It is therefore up to the teacher to make children aware of the link they must make between code and meaning in order to learn to read (Elliott, 1993), taking into account the purpose and functions of reading as well as the strategies that will help them find meaning and resolve difficulties. The fundamental research (Saada-Robert and Rieben, 1993) has highlighted the roles played respectively by phonogrammic units and semantic units in the construction of written language (cf. Catach, 1978).

By demonstrating that students use a wide variety of strategies at any given moment, these findings bring about a shift in the focus of research from student to teacher. They emphasize the importance of targeted interventions in young children's learning processes, such as developing awareness of the narrative structure of the texts - the alphabetic code, phonemic segmentation and ultimately the transition from oral to written language. Two teaching situations designed for students aged 4 to 8 are *child-to-adult dictation*, where the teacher writes out a text dictated by students, and the use of a *reference text* as a writing aid (Saada-Robert et al., 2003, 2005). The reference text, which is used for activities such as finding and copying words, can be produced through *child-to-adult dictation*. In these situations, writing is invested with a communicative purpose that is grounded in the text. *Child-to-adult dictation* allows the student to precociously adopt the stance of a writer-speaker and thereby understand the communicative function of writing. It allows for a *meaningful* processing of the word unit because the latter remains embedded in the text unit. Finally, in order to communicate, writing supposes a constant articulation between alphabetic and orthographic systems, on the one hand, and the properties of text genres on the other. In this way, the young child/student is given the opportunity to simultaneously discover the two foundations of writing, which all too often are dissociated in school learning situations (code and comprehension). Assessment of the infralexical abilities that children construct in one of these situations, the *reference text*, has highlighted a marked improvement in segmental awareness (deleting and blending of phonemes) and *knowledge of sounds and letters* (Auvergne, 2002).

Writing, understood in terms of written production, deserves to be more widely developed at all levels. In the early stages, this can be done through *child-to-adult dictation* (child-to-teacher) based on various kinds of texts (Thévenaz-Christen, 2012). This tool provides many insights into the functioning of the writing system, facilitating the reproduction of the experience and enabling the child to step back and reflect on the exercise. *Child-to-adult dictation* can definitely help students who have not yet grasped the function of writing and who remain fixed on the idea that it is an innate ability. It also helps children overcome the fear of misspelling and focus on rereading and the need not to write as they speak. In fact, *child-to-adult dictation* works on a core problem, namely the management of the written language situation. How does the child deal with this situation, despite the absence of an interlocutor? How do you recreate a world that is not shared by interlocutors? Again, the earliness and frequency of experiences are a factor. In line with the approach of Clesse (1977) and Hébrard (1977), which is based on the hypothesis that, first, reading activity is guided by all the meanings constructed by the child from the context and, second, the acquisition of reading supposes a simultaneous appropriation of writing, researchers have developed specific activities that prepare children to produce texts from early schooling. The children begin by constructing representations of language through oral expression, by making up stories from images. Subsequently, *child-to-adult dictation* (Pasquier, n.d.), whether individual or collective, is used to let students become familiar with writing at their own pace and in interactive learning situations. This develops their awareness of the specifics of written language, its different functions and its constraints (breakdown of the text into words and sentences). Finally, written expression activities and interactive activities for reading and producing texts permanently ground the learning process in meaningful contexts by linking two components that are essential to initiating students into writing, respectively the approach to meaning and the approach to code. These activities are introduced into reading and writing instruction from early schooling. They are based on the assumption that specific knowledge, such as knowledge of letters and the segmentation of spoken language, develops in complex reading-writing situations in which students manage the various components in an integrated way. They are incorporated into a didactic method that emphasizes the meaning attributed to writing without ignoring how important it is to appropriate the code and spelling conventions. The activities are therefore designed to enable children to construct and use competencies, but the way in which the teacher constructs the learning situations also takes into account the social conditions in which these competencies develop.

Starting from the premise that reading and writing should be addressed simultaneously, the didactic sequences developed in Geneva, in particular for the teaching of French by the primary education authority (*Service du français - Direction de l'Enseignement Primaire*), constitutes a method of reading instruction that combines early awareness of both the functions of reading and decoding.

> In our view, written production is the best introduction to writing. Through production, the child rapidly progresses by discovering the characteristics of writing. Proficiency in the graphophonological code is established faster and more efficiently, the functions of writing are better internalized and reading is invested with meaning from the start of the learning process (Dolz, 1994).

3. THE ROLE OF VOCABULARY IN LEARNING TO READ

Research on the early stages of reading instruction brings to light a strong correlation between the vocabulary component, deciphering abilities and oral and written comprehension (David, 2003; Gombert et al., 2000). Vocabulary is considered to be an excellent predictor of comprehension. The relationship appears to be reciprocal rather than one-way. The more words the child knows, the more he or she reads and understands and

the better the child understands, the better he or she acquires words. The question then is how to increase lexical knowledge. Psycholinguistic studies in the English-speaking world point to the positive role played by environmental factors in increasing vocabulary: exposure to the written word (Cunningham and Stanovich, 1991; Nagy and Anderson, 1984); exposure to television (Rice and Woodsmall, 1988, quoted by Gathercole and Baddely, 1993) and formal classroom work (White et al., 1989).

The classic model of teaching French stressed (and still stresses) vocabulary development as one of the key areas of language proficiency, a strategy adopted at a time when not all French citizens spoke French. Before producing discourse or texts, the classic model was designed to start with the appropriation of vocabulary along with grammar and spelling. When French instruction methods were revised, the approach was reversed; language activities and the study of text genres encouraged the construction of language abilities or competencies. Although both methods adopted a communicative approach, the didactics of French as a first language and the didactics of French as a foreign language did not consider the construction of these abilities in the same way. When French was taught as a first language, the emphasis was on actively and consciously learning vocabulary. When French was taught as a foreign language, in the 1980s, the approach was based on acquisition. Broad exposure to target language data suffices to build intuitive knowledge (Kraschen, 1985). This brings to mind the saying (which is probably influenced by active pedagogy): you have to communicate to learn and not learn to communicate.

Lack of vocabulary or difficulties relating to this issue are common themes in the field of education. This chronic shortcoming, described as 'dizzying' by David (2003, p. 62), conceals another problem, related to 'the quality of this vocabulary or rather of these vocabularies' (p. 62). The ability to recognize a high number of units does not necessarily ensure a proficient understanding of their meanings. The polysemy linked to variations in contexts can act as a barrier and generate misunderstandings. Common words, which often have multiple meanings, are only understood in uses limited to certain contexts. This has led some educationists to propose systematic vocabulary lessons in order to study the most frequent examples of highly non-specific, hyperonymic and polysemic words (Aeby et al., 2000).

Vocabulary is the point of articulation between proficiency in deciphering and, proficiency in understanding oral and written texts encountered in different texts and contexts. Deciphering involves both recognizing words on the basis of orthographic patterns and graphophonological correspondences, and identifying the meaning of words (David, 2003). Identifying a word involves: (1) linking the word to semantic and syntactic contexts; (2) analysing the word in relation to experience, the referent and constructed knowledge; and (3) identifying the orthographic and morphological features of the word. Mobilizing this dual ability expands the learner reader's mental lexicon, which psycholinguists describe as a network of connections.

Learning vocabulary consequently depends on the mental lexicon the child has built up orally in different texts and contexts and through written words encountered in various text genres. Vocabulary lessons should foster links between oral and written forms in comprehension and production.

Reading comprehension stumbles when unknown words appear, interrupting the reader's flow and making him or her lose control of comprehension. Studies show that it suffices to have two percent of unknown words in a text to make reading difficult. In order for children and students to read texts that are deemed more difficult and to discover unfamiliar words, having the teacher read aloud while adding comments or

reformulating is a powerful means of helping children understand new words (Gombert et al., 2000, p. 91). For David (2003), reading comprehension difficulties are related to several factors. Obstacles are created by approaches that are essentially referential: 'The lexical approach... seems to be associated with a narrow conception of reference, reduced to a simple correspondence between words and things' (p. 71). In this approach, the rules of how language works are more or less ignored. There is no consideration given to derived or figurative meanings, idioms, the use of metaphor or synonyms, and even less to textual diversity and to how texts are spoken (Laparra, 1986). Knowledge of several languages is an advantage insofar as reality is framed differently from one language to another and linguistic functioning can vary greatly between languages in morphological, orthographic and textual terms. These differences allow for comparisons from which it is possible to construct a reflective view of how languages function.

The findings outlined in the research point to vocabulary as a genuine educational object that supports the teaching and learning of reading comprehension.

MASTERING THE DIMENSIONS OF THE CODE

The method used to teach the written code reveals a lot about a reading instruction method as a whole. It has often been the central component in categorizing a reading method and depends on the writing system. For an alphabetic writing system, the code is based on the system of graphophonemic correspondence, syllable combinations and graphic rules. As studies have demonstrated, these components vary according to the language, some being more transparent in terms of their phonogrammic system (Italian, German) or more opaque, attributing more importance to morphology (French, English) (Jaffré, 1997, p. 24; Jaffré, 1998). These writing - and spelling - related components determine the relevance of teaching methods.

Two models are regularly used to explain word identification processes. The first and more prominent of the two is the stage-based model. It considers the development of reading skills as a three-stage process: an initial phase in which children recognize visual patterns from varied cues without using linguistic processing; a second phase where students resort to phonological mediation, identifying words by matching graphemes and phonemes, which implies they already understand the alphabetic principle and are proficient in the rules of conversion; a third phase of analysing words in orthographic units, without systematic use of phonological information. This model therefore insists on the fact that word identification is based on a dual process (Coltheart 1978; Coltheart et al., 2001): phonological mediation, to decipher words (indirect path), and orthographic recognition (direct path). To manipulate the units of written language, students must first understand that written language is the result of a dual coding of meaning and sound, and be able to grasp how it relates to spoken language. Alphabetic systems such as those in French and African languages for example establish correspondences between graphic units – graphemes – and units of second articulation in oral language – phonemes. Nonetheless, the relevance of this first model in elucidating the learning process in a multilingual context has not been proven and is open to discussion.

The second model is connectionist and features in comparatist approaches in particular. It considers that a word is represented in memory by a 'configuration of activations of orthographic, phonological and semantic units' (Nouri et al., 2003). From the outset, this model therefore assigns an important role to semantics and orthography alongside phonology. In effect, this means that 'one cannot deal with written language without considering spoken language, one cannot neglect the phonological code in favour of meaning or meaning in favour of the phonological code. Each dimension has its importance, all the dimensions contribute to the definition of the overall activity' (Gombert, 2003, p. 19).

1. Orthographic units are activated by the perception of letters; they are triggered as soon as the reader's eye focuses on a word. The orthographic units emit signals to activate the semantic units and phonological units.

2. The phonological units are activated and in turn emit activating signals for letters compatible with these configurations.

3. The semantic units are activated simultaneously; they are also influenced by contextual factors (syntactic, semantic and pragmatic constraints) activating phonological and orthographic units used to recognize a word.

The flexibility of the connectionist model and the interactive system by which it functions seems to give it a greater relevance to describe the workings of different languages and writing systems, unlike the first model whose universality has been called into question. It also gives pride of place to metalinguistic skills (metaphonological and metasyntactic skills). In this conception, 'learning implies a continuous modification of connections between units in response to the repetition of reading' (p. 9).

Letter knowledge

Letter knowledge is regarded as a fundamental skill in learning to read, with recent research pointing to it as one of the best predictors of reading acquisition (for an overview, see Foulin, 2007; Foulin and Pacton 2007; Muter et al., 2004). There are three dimensions involved in learning letters: names, sounds and forms. It is recommended to begin teaching letters in pre-school and to continue during first and second grade as it is far from certain that letter knowledge is acquired by the time children enter primary school (Ecalle and Magnan, 2002; Foulin, 2007). One should keep in mind that letter knowledge implies the ability to recognize letters in a random order and has nothing to do with reciting the alphabet, which in no way guarantees that a child knows how to read.

Some authors emphasize the visual dimension (Coltheart et al., 2001; Longcamp et al., 2010). Others stress the role of letters in associations of written and oral units (Bonnefoy and Rey, 2008), others still the fact that knowing the names of letters enables learners to deduce their sounds and perform initial grapheme/phoneme matches (Treiman, 2006; Hilairet de Boisféron et al., 2010). Regarding this last point, it seems that it is just as important to recognize letters as it is to name them as quickly as possible (Bonnefoy and Rey, 2008). Further-more, knowing the names of letters seems to result in better performances in spelling and phonological awar-eness (Biot-Chevrier et al., 2008; Castels and Coltheart, 2004). These studies have demonstrated that only children who know the names of the letters are capable of segmenting words into onset-rime. Consequently, 'knowledge of letter names can be an influence on syllabic awareness and phonemic awareness' (Briquet-Du-hazé, 2013, p. 115). The latter author insists on the child's ability to 'name all the letters of the alphabet in random order' (p. 115), which is a more explicit definition of letter knowledge than the one given in French pre-school programmes (2008, p. 14), which state that the child must be able to 'recognize and write most of the letters of the alphabet', and similarly for their sounds and written forms (Briquet-Duhazé, 2013, p. 122).

The correspondence between graphic units and phonic units: the alphabetic principle

Understanding the correspondence between graphic units and units of second articulation of oral language, phonemes, implies an interest in language itself, regardless of meaning. This objectivation does not occur

automatically, but results from the work done at school. To assimilate the alphabetic principle (Morais, 1998), the student must understand that speech can be segmented into units (words, syllables and phonemes; Liberman and Shankweiler, 1979) and gradually grasp the associations between oral units (phonemes) and written units (graphemes), as well as the principle of their co-articulation (phonemic blending). Gombert (2005) advocates working directly on the alphabetic principle to speed up phonemic awareness and facilitate the automatization of processes necessary for word identification. This process can be qualified as metalinguistic, as it goes from phonological awareness and awareness of phoneme strings to the conscious manipulation of language phonemes, which some researchers refer to as phonemic awareness. From this point of view, there is a clear heterogeneity in the levels of phonological abstraction (Morais, 1991). Once this mechanism of matching phonemes and graphemes is triggered, students can convert the written word into oral language. Providing they can speak the language they will be able to understand its meaning. However, an ability to decipher is insufficient if the student has not memorized a semantic representation associated with the acoustic image of the word.

Phonological awareness

The importance of phonological awareness was highlighted from the 1980s onwards (Alegria and Morais, 1989; Bradley and Bryant, 1983; Perfetti et al., 1987; Sprenger-Charolles et al., 2006; Swank and Catts, 1994; Torgesen, 2000). Perfetti et al. (1991) defines phonological awareness as 'the conscious manipulation of the components of words'. When children develop this skill, they become able to manipulate the sound units of oral language. Specifically, they can perform tasks such as removing a phoneme in a word, replacing one phoneme with another, segmenting a word into syllables, phonemes, etc.

Studies, such as the one conducted by Bradley and Bryant, (1983) demonstrate that phonological awareness is in fact a strong predictor of reading and writing ability. Moreover, a lot of research shows that training phonological awareness can be of great benefit in teaching writing. Habib (1997) lists numerous studies demonstrating a correlation between abilities in phonological awareness and reading skills. Nonetheless, it would seem that the relationship between phonological awareness and reading is not a straightforward one.

Perfetti and Rieben (1991) refer to two possible scenarios regarding the link between the two. First, a scenario in which phonological awareness is considered to be a consequence of learning to read the alphabet, because phonological awareness develops through reading. In the second scenario, phonological awareness is considered a prerequisite to learning to read and write, as the student's phonological awareness skills are what enable him or her to learn to read. Studies conducted by Bradley and Bradley (1983), Kolinsky (1994), Liberman (1980) and Morais (1979) demonstrate that children who have been trained in phonological awareness achieve better results in reading than untrained children. This reading advantage among trained children persists throughout primary schooling.

To assess the effects of phonemic awareness (PA) instruction on the teaching of reading and writing, Ehri (2001) conducted a quantitative meta-analysis of fifty-two articles published in peer-reviewed journals that led to ninety-six studies comparing phonological awareness outcomes among treatment and control groups:

> Analysis of effect sizes revealed that the impact of PA instruction on helping children acquire PA was large and statistically significant (d = 0.86). PA instruction exerted a moderate, statistically significant impact on

reading (d = 0.53) and spelling (d = 0.59). Not only word reading but also reading comprehension benefited. PA instruction impacted reading under all the conditions examined although effect sizes were larger under some conditions. PA instruction helped various types of children: normally developing readers as well as at-risk and disabled readers; pre-schoolers, kindergartners, and first graders; low socioeconomic status children as well as mid-high SES PA instruction improved reading, but it did not improve spelling in disabled readers. PA instruction was more effective when it was taught with letters than without letters, when one or two PA skills were taught than multiple PA skills, when children were taught in small groups than individually or in classrooms, and when instruction lasted between 5 and 18 hours rather than longer. Classroom teachers were effective in teaching PA to their students. Effect sizes were larger for studies using more rigorous experimental designs, with rigor assessments drawn from Troia (1999). In sum, PA instruction was found to make a statistically significant contribution to reading acquisition (Ehri, 2001).

This shows that both scenarios were verified and confirmed by several studies. Phonological awareness is both a prerequisite to and an outcome of learning to read. It remains that, in written alphabetic languages, phonological awareness skills are closely linked to good reading development (Kanta and Rey, 2003). Concerning learning to read in a second language, research conducted by Comeau et al. (1999) points to a transfer between alphabetic languages in the case of a one-year programme designed to develop phonological awareness skills in French for English-speaking students. This hypothesis appears to be confirmed by further studies (Quiroga, et al., 2002; for a summary of this research see Meschyan and Hernandez, 2004).

Morphological awareness

Even though morphological awareness does not have the same importance as phonological awareness in the emergence of reading skills, it also comes into play early, along with syntactic awareness, and could, according to Nouri et al. (2003, p. 9), 'be significant in compensation strategies in the case of phonological deficit' (particularly important for some languages such as Bantu (Trudell, 2013). Reading is not deduced from word recognition; skilled readers carry out a 'syntactic calculation of the meaning of sentences and the development of the text representation' (p. 10).

Gombert's studies highlight the importance from an early stage of morphology, i.e. the significant role of letter patterns in the way learner readers process information; pseudo-words with a prefix + base structure (such as 'préfader*') are recognized by 5-year-old pre-readers as being more like real words than others examples devoid of this morphological structure ('pradéfer*') (Gombert, 2003, p. 21). Sensitivity to the morphology of words in oral language therefore exists before reading. It also seems that 'beginner French readers take into account the morphology of written words during the act of reading. They consequently read prefixed words ('retomber') better than pseudo-prefixed words (e.g. 'renifler') (Gombert, 2003, p 23). 'It appears that from when children first start learning to read, on the one hand they take into account the morphological structure of words, and on the other they have greater ease processing terms encountered for the first time when they recognize its base' (Gombert, 2003, p 23). This ability to analyse graphomorphological patterns has been demonstrated by skilled readers' recognition of written words (Colé 1999; Colé et al., 1997). As such, it deserves to be considered as more than a form of knowledge to be acquired late so as to enable students to spell correctly.

Given the analogies the beginner reader establishes between words already encountered and new words based on orthographic, alphabetic-phonological and orthographic-morphological patterns, increasing the frequency of contact with written words boosts this implicit learning tenfold. Some forms of writing attribute considerable importance to the semantic dimension and notably to morphology. Where alphabetic languages and French in particular are concerned, this dimension is quite significant (Jaffré, 2003). In this sense, no writing is strictly alphabetical. A digraph such as 'ai' in '(il) venait', can therefore be considered a phonogram or a morphogram (Jaffré, 2003, p. 37).

4. PRACTICES IN READING INSTRUCTION

This section focuses on research on initial reading instruction for French as a first language.

COMPONENTS TO BE INTRODUCED AT DIFFERENT MOMENTS IN THE LEARNING PROCESS

Goigoux (2004) examined the components used in the initial teaching of reading and their introduction at different moments in the learning process. Drawing from a synthesis of studies, he presents a description of actual practices and an analysis of their effectiveness. He highlights various components involved in reading instruction that practitioners must introduce at different moments in the learning process: word identification and production, reading comprehension, text production and acculturation to writing (Goigoux, 2001a).

The research conducted by Goigoux, straddling didactics and ergonomic psychology, seeks to describe the foundations of the professional expertise employed by teachers when teaching reading in the early stages of schooling. For instance, he highlights the 'didactic adjustments' that characterize this professional expertise, which he defines as the ability to operationalize the students' zone of proximal development during an activity (Goigoux, 2001a, p. 132), for example when organizing and managing collective exercises on words, this implies:

1. Soliciting word recognition, focusing students' attention on the word unit, etc.
2. Underscoring the co-reference to the class (pointing to the word, showing it to everyone), underlining words or parts of designated and/or identified words, drawing a dotted line when the decision to identify the word has not been made yet and this is problematic, etc.
3. Memorizing the work done, indicating the words already identified to the class (highlighting them, having the students read them again), repeating or having students repeat the sound value of a recognized word, reading or having students reread the text linearly while pronouncing identified words and omitting unknown words, focusing students' attention on the work that remains to be done, pointing out written words as they are spoken aloud, etc.
4. Developing, in front of the class and collectively, the answer to a problem of word identification, step by step, through a complete decoding adapted to the pace of the slowest students, without the untimely interruption of a student who knows the solution (to be alternated with whispering, the public phase following the private phase) (Goigoux, 2001a, p. 129).

He therefore stresses the specific components that apply to educational content and levels. This research reinforces the observation made by Fijalkow (2014) that: '… it's not just about working on the phoneme and the syllable, but also reading texts that are meaningful to the children and using practices that are likely to foster an interest in reading and help them understand the purpose of classroom activities.'

WHAT IS THE CURRENT THINKING ON READING METHODS?

As already pointed out by Rieben, the results obtained after three decades of research on written language, give reason to expect that polemics are a thing of the past. The existing studies largely demonstrate that the acquisition of reading is a complex and multidimensional process (1989, p. 17). With this in mind, the point here is not to embark on yet another discussion of reading methods, but to reflect on the links that these methods forge with practices in specific teaching and learning contexts.

Synthetic methods

Synthetic methods are based on discovering and learning the smallest units of the language. They prioritize the study of linguistic signs rather than a meaning-based approach to texts. The oldest of these methods start from letters (or letters/sounds) and associate them with their reference sound value (the letter 'o' is considered to make the sound /o/ without any distinction between sounds such as /ou/ or /on/), then combine vowels and consonants to form all possible syllables that students must memorize before combining them in turn to make words (the blending method). These older synthetic methods fail to discriminate between letter and sound, a confusion that ends when the distinction between phonemes and graphemes is introduced. A syllabic[2] approach that more specifically draws on letter knowledge and the combination of written forms with their corresponding phones (syllable) can be described as going from an unknown code (letter combinations) to the known code (the string of sounds in spoken language).

Today, phonogrammic, or more simply phonic methods start by studying phonemes and then look at how they match graphemes. These methods aim to develop the learner's awareness of the correspondence between the formal components of spoken language (phonemes and the sound they make when pronounced) and the units of written language (graphemes and the written forms in letters and groups of letters). This first requires that students learn to segment and discriminate the minimal units of spoken language in order to achieve a sufficient degree of phonological awareness. The child must have acquired explicit knowledge of the segmentation of the spoken string into identified sounds, and be able to recognize and produce them separately.

The synthetic method requires students to discover and understand the alphabetic principle. The purpose is to understand that there is a mechanism of arbitrary but relatively regular correspondence between the units of oral language and those of written language. For an alphabetic language such as French, having knowledge of its constituents and correspondences between speech and writing is a necessity. The steps of blending and combination that follow – mechanically – are no less abstract as a result. The students are taught to connect certain minimum units to form larger units, syllables, and then words or phrases written for the sole purpose of assembling syllables. A lesson consists of first identifying a phoneme by ear, then locating it in an oral word and finally discovering how it is transcribed in writing (Goigoux and Cèbe, 2004).

Analytical methods

A method is considered to be 'analytical' in the sense that it starts from large written units (sometimes a text, more frequently a sentence or a word), to examine their components (words, syllables, graphemes, letters) and then the corresponding sounds. In a way, analytical methods use the opposite approach to syllabic methods regarding word identification and the construction of the graphophonological equivalence system.

2- The term 'syllabic', which designates reading methods that are sound-based or start from sounds, is in fact rarely used outside of France.
In many countries, such methods are referred to as synthetic or phonic (Chauveau, 2008, p.17).

In this respect, they appeal to meaning a little more than the former.

Whole-word method

The whole-word method is associated with one name in particular, that of Decroly, who himself never used this term. Like his contemporary Claparède, he considers that the child spontaneously perceives wholes, sets of things, and that he or she then focuses on some details and begins to analyse the identified object and grasp its components. One of the bases of his method is an exercise in the form of game in which he presents words or groups of words written on cards. Children recognize the words and give them a meaning.

Natural method

Freinet's natural method places the text at the heart of schoolwork and stresses the capital importance of writing (the production of words and texts). The communicative dimension of writing is emphasized. Graphophonological correspondences are established on the basis of words encountered in texts and student reactions.

Ideovisual method

The ideovisual method, developed in the USA by Smith and Goodman and in France by Foucambert, but which has practically disappeared from classes, is the only method to forbid the study of graphophonological correspondences and consequently also the study of the systematic relationships between oral and written language, according to the criterion defined by Goigoux (2004). On the basis of a description of expert procedures, it in fact banishes the teaching of deciphering entirely. However, it systematizes memorization and visual discrimination exercises; students have to remember written words, using their orthographic and morphological structure to help them. The ideovisual method can certainly be credited for the attention now paid to the development of the direct route, which is included in many manuals and often explicitly mentioned in programmes. It emphasizes techniques used to create an orthographic lexicon (the most common words and function words, in first grade) by exercising memory and the visual discrimination of words considered as series of letters rather than as shapes whose outline students are supposed to memorize (Goigoux, 2004 p. 45).

Charmeux, (1987, 2013) points out the false quarrel over methods of reading instruction (see Figure 1.1 below). Synthetic, analytic or mixed methods depict a reading instruction approach that is firstly built around the identification of the word, the word as unit. Subsequently, the instruction focuses on the understanding written sentences or texts.

1 – The procedure proposed by syllabic methods (synthetic methods)

Identify the letters whether associated with sounds or not → Assemble them in syllables → Pronounce the syllables → Assemble the syllables in words ⤏ Understand the word

2 – The procedure proposed by whole-word methods (analytic methods)

Working from a familiar sentence (Decroly method) ↔ Recognize the whole words → Analyse the words in terms of syllables and letters → Pronounce these syllables and identify the letters ⤏ Make new words, pronounce them with the letters and syllable

From a written sentence or a memorized list ("French" method)

Figure 1.1: The false quarrel over methods of reading instruction (Charmeux, 2013)

The false quarrel over methods of reading instruction.

The methods are based on the same assumption: you start by identifying the words in a text to understand the text, and by deciphering, before or after identifying the words.

Mixed methods

These methods articulate work on units that convey meaning with exercises on graphophonological deciphering. They traditionally adopt a dual approach: students first encounter writing through the ideovisual method and after a few months they discover the segmentation of language by switching to the synthetic method.

The joint mixed approach simultaneously proposes activities drawn from the analytic and synthetic methods. According to Goigoux (2004), the mixed methods remain strongly influenced by syllabic methods and are based on the same principles, except that the discovery of letters is preceded by a rapid presentation of words in an illustrated sentence that is very quickly broken down into words and syllables. Within these methods, a graphophonological approach is based on the construction of written form/phone correspondences (between grapheme or letter and sound) and then phone/written form, and the automatization of decoding/encoding procedures. Like in synthetic methods, it is considered that the child acquires meaning through deciphering. Work on the comprehension of the text is considered impossible at the beginning of the learning process and is introduced only after several months have been spent studying juxtaposed sentences (featuring verbs in the present, with no connectors and few noun substitutes).

Interactive methods

Interactive methods agree on the need to develop, simultaneously and interactively, all the skills required to learn to read and write, such as the identification and production of written words, comprehension of sentences and texts and familiarization with written culture.

Interactive methods are rooted in traditions of text production (Chartier et al., 1998) and cultural integration (Chauveau and Rogovas-Chauveau, 1994, 2000). Access to long and complex texts is then mediated by adults (Grossmann, 1994). This process is accompanied by reformulation exercises to significantly expand the lexicon and the procedures underlying the textual comprehension (Goigoux, 2003). They bring complex cognitive exercises into play, which constitute the act of reading and are initially to be done collectively under the supervision of the teacher (Bernardin, 1997). The study of the graphophonological code and, more rarely, the graphomorphological one (semantic study of word structure: prefix, suffix and base), holds varying degrees of importance depending on the different approaches and often starts later than in phonic methods. These include the possibility of identifying words in context (Goigoux 2001). Some of these methods have abandoned the use of textbooks to focus on long texts drawn from children's literature, others, currently in vogue, integrate works of children's literature into the textbooks. Others still study texts based on their content, linguistic complexity and genre.

5. PLANNING PROGRESSION IN LEARNING

Considering reading and writing practices in terms of the initiation into written culture means changing the definition of the purpose of learning, as J. Fijalkow (1997) writes: 'Technical learning is in fact replaced by a shift to another culture. In this perspective, written language is not conceived of as a communication tool alone, but also as a vector of culture, a vector by which the child goes from one cultural world to another, from the oral world to the written world.' This implies a rupture between everyday culture and school culture while opening up to further cultures again – scientific, artistic, technical, etc. This dimension is essential and definitely constitutes one answer to the problems posed by a strictly technical approach to early reading

instruction that is 'promoted in the family and school environments (and) brings about an unfortunate divide between those who can learn to read and those who cannot, between those who succeed and those who fail' (Weiss, 1976).

There is general consensus that reading methods should focus on developing all the skills required to learn to read and write simultaneously and interactively, according to the following definition of reading - wherein reading and learning to read are considered as complex activities simultaneously mobilizing a set of components constituted by:

- An awareness of the purpose of the activity and the formulation of a project by the reader;
- General knowledge (of the world, texts, languages);
- Specific knowledge (of the text genre being read, sentences, words and infralexical units).

These components must interact dynamically with each other and be woven together during the act of constructing the meaning of a text in a practical situation. They enable the formation of a judgment (by providing content, interest, aesthetic quality) related to the reader's project. None of these components can be entirely absent from the construction process by which meaning and judgment are achieved, but none need to be fully mastered to understand a text. This means, for example, that it is not enough to know how to decode each unit of a word to understand it, and conversely, that understanding an unknown word requires a certain degree of proficiency in deciphering. Furthermore, the act of understanding a word is itself governed by the reader's desire to construct meaning from the text they are looking at, and indeed this is even a condition of its success.

Recent research has shown that technical decoding is only one aspect of what is referred to as reading. The development of letter knowledge, phonological awareness and attention to combinations should not obscure the fact that other skills are mobilized when learning to read. The definition of different reader profiles – readers who do not establish a link between code and meaning; readers who do establish a link between code and meaning and readers who establish a link between code and writing – attests to the relevance of an interactive model of reading instruction. Progress occurs in reading when the 'learner readers adopt procedures revealing a link is being made between code and meaning, or between code and writing' (Elliott, 1993). Recent research has also demonstrated that there is no single path but a variety of learning and comprehension strategies. Finally, these new approaches that take students' difficulties into account, are also aimed at improving teaching methods: 'The aim is no longer to "immerse" the children in writing and leave them to their own devices, but to observe their procedures such as we have described them in order to help them progress according to their own paths' (Elliott, 1993). Thus, many innovations in reading and writing instruction offer 'a more responsible introduction into the world of writing' (Dolz and Pasquier, 1996).

KEY POINTS

What findings result from the contributions of research? From the vast available literature, of which only a small part has been presented here for purposes of illustration, a number of conclusions may be drawn. The first of these apply to the initiation into written culture, a concept that goes back to the hypothesis that a transfer occurs between different languages.

1. The purpose of teaching and learning reading and writing is to initiate students into written culture, fostering a reflective, conscious and explicit proficiency in language where the latter is considered as an object of learning.

2. The various contexts in which texts are used and the variety of texts proposed to students are fundamental factors in initiating them into written culture and having them construct a relationship with both knowledge and the world while at school.

3. Exposing the student to all sorts of writing, in particular through frequent contact with books, acts as an important first step in the process of acculturation to writing. What matters is not so much the quantity as the quality of discussions about the texts.

4. Discussions about the texts and their functions are fundamental in early learning and may support academic achievement, thanks to the meaning they attribute to learning and, especially, to learning to read and write, which is no longer reduced to learning the written code.

5. From the early school grades, an emphasis should be placed on deepening and broadening the means of oral expression acquired in the family setting by developing the links between oral and written language, with a view to working on formal oral genres, since the purpose of school is to educate.

6. The links between reading and writing are fundamental to teaching and learning. A technique such as child-to-adult dictation offers students a way of familiarizing themselves with writing at their own pace in interactive learning situations with the teacher. Students become aware of the specifics of written language and its various functions, as well as its constraints (text segmentation into words and phrases). The use of the reference text technique has shown a marked improvement in segmental awareness (deleting and blending of phonemes) and knowledge of sounds and letters.

7. There is a strong correlation between vocabulary, deciphering abilities and oral and written comprehension. Lexical instruction should foster links between oral and written forms in comprehension and production. In order for students to read texts that are deemed more difficult and to discover unfamiliar words, having the teacher read aloud while adding comments or reformulating is a powerful means of helping children understand new words.

KEY POINTS

8. Knowledge of several languages is an advantage insofar as reality is framed differently from one language to another and linguistic functioning can vary greatly between languages from a morphological, orthographic and textual perspective. These differences allow for comparisons from which it is possible to construct a reflective view of how languages function.

9. In the connectionist model of reading instruction, the semantic dimensions (which undergo the influence of various contextual factors) along with the orthographic dimensions (activated by the perception of letters) are given as much importance as the phonological dimensions, from the earliest stages of instruction. Metalinguistic skills (metaphonological and metasyntactic skills) also play a key role.

10. Phonological awareness is defined as the conscious manipulation of the components of words and the ability to manipulate the sound units of oral language by performing tasks such as deleting a phoneme in a word, replacing one phoneme with another, segmenting a word into syllables, phonemes, etc. It is a good predictor of success in reading and writing.

11. Early knowledge of the alphabet, letter names and their matching sound is also a good predictor of success in learning to read.

12. Morphological awareness is defined as the conscious perception of the meaningful role of letter patterns in the operations that occur during reading. It develops, in particular, through the analogies the reader establishes between words already encountered and new words based on orthographic, alphabetic-phonological and orthographic-morphological patterns.

13. Progress occurs in reading when students adopt procedures revealing a link between code and meaning, or between code and writing. There is no single path but a variety of learning and comprehension strategies, something which an interactive model appears to favour.

14. Reading instruction comprises multiple components. It's not just about working on the phoneme and the syllable, but also entails reading texts that are meaningful to the students and using practices that are likely to foster an interest in reading and help them understand the purpose of classroom activities. The challenge is to achieve a responsible initiation into written culture.

CHAPTER **2**

READING INSTRUCTION
IN A MULTICULTURAL CONTEXT

CHAPTER 2

'…it is perfectly clear that for teaching and cultural work in regions where multilingualism is an essential fact in child development, one must conduct a detailed analysis of the different methods of educating children'

(Vygotsky, 1928, p. 408).

'It is well known that learning a foreign language at school and developing one's native language involve two entirely different processes. Almost none of the laws that were so well learned during the development of the native language apply with any degree of similarity in the foreign language, that is to say a semantic system corresponding point by point to concepts previously acquired'

(Vygotsky, P and L, p. 375).

In a multicultural and multilingual context, learning to read (but also to write and speak in formal situations) poses a number of problems for both teachers and learners, as is well documented in the literature. The purpose of this chapter is therefore to understand the 'initiation into written culture' in contexts where children have to acquire this ability in two or even three languages.

It begins by briefly defining what 'multicultural' and 'multilingual' mean from the perspective of the initiation into written culture and in the context of sub-Saharan Africa, specifically in the three countries visited for the needs of this research: Burkina Faso, Niger, and Senegal. The purpose here is not to present a detailed description, nor to add knowledge to a field of study that is already extensively researched, but to clarify the situation in these three countries on the basis of the existing literature. The next step will be to briefly overview the discussions taking place at the political level with regard to language use in teaching, demonstrating that while there is something of a consensus regarding principles, their application in the field varies greatly. A series of experiments and analyses concerning multilingual situations in Western countries will then be summarized, as some principles may have a universal relevance, despite the dissimilarity of the contexts. Furthermore, there is a key issue to be taken into account, namely the diversity of writing systems. While the orthographic systems used in African languages appear to be identical (with the obvious exception of Arabic), there are in fact fundamental differences between them and those of the official state languages, including French. The chapter will conclude in a more didactic perspective, with a closer look at a series of methods advocated for reading and writing instruction, an analysis of textbooks and, finally, some descriptions of class practices.

The approach adopted in this chapter is intended to be illustrative: in light of the principles and general data presented in Chapter 1, the aim is to define, from a linguistic point of view, the issues specific to a particular situation. This will result in a number of observations/findings, however the latter are not the focus of this chapter, whose purpose is primarily to prepare the ground for the analyses that will follow in Chapters 5 and 6.

1. MULTILINGUALISM: AN OMNIPRESENT HISTORICAL REALITY THAT ALL TEACHING MUST TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION

Multilingualism is a reality in most, if not all countries around the world, and this has always been the case. This linguistic wealth and diversity particularly characterizes the African continent. As pointed out by Wolff (2011, p. 37): 'The African continent is home to nearly one third of the world's living languages; there are roughly between 1,200 and 2,000 indigenous African languages for a total of 5,000 to 6,000 languages still spoken around the globe.' Figure 2.1 illustrates the situation in sub-Saharan Africa with respect to this research.
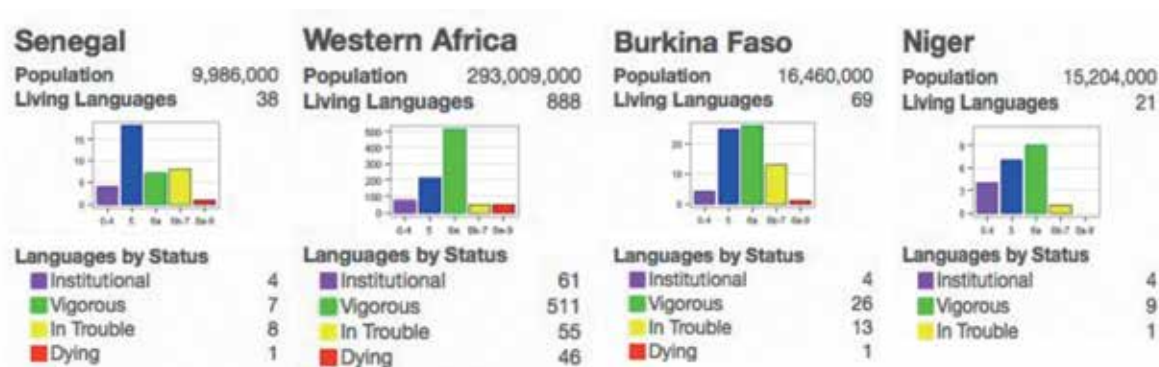
Figure 2.1: Population and number of languages according to SIL:

http://www.ethnologue.com/region/WAF (accessed 24 August 2014)

Wolff (2011, p. 42) further specifies the status of the languages spoken in Burkina Faso and Senegal:

> Burkina Faso has about 60 languages for a population of 9 million, half of which is morephone (speaks the More language), i.e. either has More at their mother tongue or is at least bilingual in their mother tongue and More. Senegal has six major "national" languages (Diola/Joola, Mandinka, Pulaar, Seereer, Soninke, Wolof) but uses French as the only "official" language, which, however, is spoken by at most 15 per cent of the population even after having dominated the educational system of the country for more than 100 years, compared to Wolof, which is spoken by 80 per cent of the population.

As for Niger, ten national languages are legally recognized. According to Article 2 of this law (2001):

> The following are proclaimed as national languages: Arabic, Budurna, Fulfulde, Gourmanchéma, Hausa, Kanuri, Sonay-Zarma, Tamajaq, Tasawaq and Tubu[3].

Hausa is spoken by over half of the population in Niger. In all three countries, the official language is French. Only some of these languages are written (see Table 2.1).

3- Law no. 2001-037 of 31 December 2001 defining the conditions for the promotion and development of national languages.

Country	Written languages	Population in millions
Benin	7	12.0
Burkina Faso	12	11.4
Cameroon	38	14.3
Central Africa	4	3.5
Chad	4	6.9
Côte d'Ivoire	19	14.6
D.R.C. (Zaire)	7	49.2
Ethiopia	11	62.0
Ghana	19	18.9
Guinea	6	7.7
Kenya	7	29.0
Liberia	4	2.7
Mali	9	11.8
Niger	5	10.1
Nigeria	22	121.8
Senegal	6	9.0
Sierra Leone	6	4.6
South Africa	8	44.3
Togo	13	4.4
Uganda	3	21.3
Zambia	7	8.7

Table 2.1: A selection of Africa's written languages (Obanya, 1999, p 83, cited in Wollf, 2010, p. 80)[4]

But what does 'written language' mean? And what are its implications for reading and writing instruction?

Another highly significant characteristic of the African reality is the central place of the languages of colonization, the language inherited from the colonial past having often been maintained as the language of power[5]. 'Consequently, virtually all African children are educated in languages other than those they speak at home.' (Sanogo, 2008, p. 28). However, as noted by the same author (p 24), 'history cannot be remade and English, French and Portuguese are now an integral part of the African reality; they must be studied to see how to get the best from them.' The question of course is: how?

GENERAL CONSEQUENCES FOR THE INITIATION INTO WRITTEN CULTURE - PARADOXES

This complex situation obviously raises the problem how to teach reading and writing, and that of the 'initiation into written culture'. From the outset, the question is twofold, namely because of the 'targets' that schools must aim for, providing access to written culture.

4- According to Victor Yameogo (in a personal communication), a national expert for Burkina Faso who contributed to this study: 'The data presented in the table are largely outdated. Burkina Faso contains at least 26 written languages (meaning coded languages) of the sixty listed here.'

5- Where this historical aspect is concerned, see for example: A. Fall (2002): L'école au Sénégal : la question de l'adaptation. Histoire d'une problématique récurrente de 1817 à nos jours. PhD dissertation, FLSH/Cheikh Anta Diop University, Dakar.

Assuming that the purpose of reading and writing instruction is to build students' ability to understand and to express themselves in written and formal language, it would seem necessary to start instruction by referring to a language the students know. Learning the code – that is to say graphophonemic correspondences, or more simply the relationship between sounds and letters – in an unknown language necessarily restricts learning to decoding. Such an approach excludes work on comprehension. Likewise, it precludes the writing of texts, even short ones, or exercises such as child-to-adult dictation. This has the consequence of restricting how students construct a representation of what reading and writing mean. Writing is not conceived as a means of producing language other than orally, but as a transcoding technique.

At the same time, as implied by Wolff's statistics (2011): many African languages are not written. The description 'not written' has two meanings:

1. The languages have not been coded. This may be deemed a minor problem, as Wolff points out (2011, p. 79): 'Even if it is true that there are no orthographies (yet) for the majority of the 2,000 African languages, this fact provides little reason to object generally to the use of African languages in education. It is a task that could be achieved easily by trained linguists in much less time and for much lower costs than generally assumed by the uninformed public.' The example of Papua New Guinea, where 450 languages are used in teaching, shows that the problem is surmountable (Bühmann and Trudell, 2008; Klaus, 2010).

2. The languages do not have very extensive written registers, meaning varied types of texts, numerous publications or specialized vocabulary for scientific subjects (in the broad sense). 'Written culture' is often still underdeveloped.

The typology defined by Maurer (2010) is useful in this regard. He distinguishes between:
- Languages that have been recently transcribed, but for which there still exists a very limited written corpus;
- Languages that have been recently transcribed and for which there exist some social uses in written form;
- Languages whose written form is used relatively widely: press articles, advertisements and other functional texts, in addition to literary stories transcribed from oral tradition, as is the case of Bamanankan for example.

Madagascar, where Malagasy has a rich written tradition with a literary corpus and a full range of social uses in writing, can be added as a fourth case.

Many African languages can be classified in the first two categories. This has consequences for the process of initiation into written culture. While the first problem, the creation of a written code, could be resolved with a reasonable investment – something that is happening with increasing frequency[6] – the second is more challenging: 'creating literacy and a sustainable post-literacy environment, however, will take more time and effort and must involve larger sections of the speaker populations (intellectuals, teachers, poets, religious leaders, etc.) and, to a certain extent, must or should involve local publishing facilities' (Wolff, 2011, p. 79). Without an environment and a culture of writing, the 'target' of education, providing access to written culture, is more difficult to reach[7].

6- See the case of Niger.

7- In the EGRA study (Sprenger-Charolles, 2008), the researchers observed higher scores in spelling skills among children in Senegal educated in French compared to children educated in Wolof. They attributed this difference to the fact that 'written Wolof is not as developed as written French; children learning to read in Wolof were therefore undoubtedly less exposed to written Wolof than those learning to read in French were to written French' (p. 21). While we agree on the importance of a developed written environment, we believe that the difference is due more to the emphasis placed on spelling in French rather than on its stronger presence in the environment, which has little significance for children who barely speak or read this language.

Alexander and Bausch (2007) speak of a necessary 'intellectualization of African languages', one of the preconditions of which is to make them languages of instruction. Using these languages in the education system will develop their potential in the field of written culture, which will in turn consolidate their importance as languages of instruction. The problem is therefore far from straightforward. As Bergmann (2002) comments: 'No one can get around going to school. Non-formal education is not an alternative to a formal school education.' And, unlike some proposals advocating a type of schooling that is close to people's everyday lives, Bergmann very much means school in the full sense, i.e. a place that creates spaces exclusively for study and learning. 'Ruralization' (Bergmann, 2002) is not a solution, as illustrated by an experiment in Burkina Faso, where a project of this type was conducted without achieving the expected results.

This raises the question of the relationship between learning in a local language, the so-called 'mother' tongue (i.e. the language of the first community a person belongs to; the term L1[8] is now used) and the appropriation of a 'written' language in the broadest sense. This appropriation is the precondition for students to develop the use of written or formal oral language in systematic learning situations and in different school subjects. Indeed, it would seem difficult to develop the use of written language in a variety of situations with a language that itself is not employed in a variety of situations, particularly for an 'intellectual' use in the broadest sense of the term.

There are several ways of overcoming this paradox. Many countries opt for a bilingual (or even trilingual[9]) education. But what model of bilingualism or multilingualism should be adopted? Other countries continue to put their faith in schooling in the official national language, which is a secondary language for virtually all students. This is a formidable challenge for teachers who must teach students to read through a foreign language while also teaching them this foreign language.

2. BILINGUAL/MULTILINGUAL[10] EDUCATION: UNDENIABLE BENEFITS ON CERTAIN CONDITIONS

Hamers and Blanc (1983, p. 301) identify three types of bilingualism in education:

- Instruction is simultaneously provided in two languages, with or without a separation in the use of these languages;
- Instruction is provided first in the students' L1; the students take classes to learn a second language until they are able to continue their education in this second language;
- Much of the teaching is initially conducted in the students' second language, their first language being later introduced first as a school subject, then as a medium of instruction.

8- 'The term "mother tongue", though widely used, may refer to several different situations. Definitions often include the following elements: the language(s) that one has learnt first; the language(s) one identifies with or is identified as a native speaker of by others; the language(s) that one knows best and the language(s) one uses the most. "Mother tongue" may also be referred to as "primary language" or "first language".

9- Wolff (2011, p. 69) proposes that three languages be taught in certain situations where a strong national language is developed from the point of view of the fields covered by the language's written form: the local language, the national language and the official international language. It may be noted that this is the model currently advocated in Switzerland, albeit on a smaller scale (the number of local languages is infinitely smaller): students learn a foreign national language from their third year of schooling, then an international language (English) from the fifth year.

10- Maurer and ELAN, among others, speak of bi/multilingual: the bilingualism of the individual in a multilingual situation. For some UNESCO definitions, see appendix.

Researchers agree almost unanimously that these different models of bilingual education yield almost identical results. Heugh (2006) compares fifteen studies (p. 67 et seq.) to come up with a table that, in its simplicity, presents a highly optimistic view of the impact of certain forms of bilingual education.

The table reads as follows: the columns represent the bilingual education models, except the first, which represents second-language (L2) instruction only; this has a 'subtractive' effect, meaning it does away with L1 to the benefit of L2. The lines represent the degree to which targets have been reached in L2. In short: paradoxically, the more instruction there is in L2, or if instruction switches to L2 too quickly, the less students master the language[11]. Magga, Dunbar, Nicolaisen, Skutnabb-Kangas, & Trask (2005, p. 2) stresses the essential role of the length of exposure to L1, stating that: 'Research conclusions about results of present-day indigenous and minority education show that the length of mother tongue medium education is more important than any o ther factor (including socio-economic status) in predicting the educational success of bilingual students.'

%						
	L2 medium Mainstream plus L2 pull-out	L1 for 2-3 years then switch to L2	L1 for 2-3 years plus specialised L2 each subject – double teaching time	L1 for 6/7 years then L2 medium	Dual medium (L1 only 5-6 yrs, L1 +L2 MOI from 7th yr.)	L1 medium throughout plus good provision of L2 as subject
TYPE	1 Subtractive	2a Early-exit transitional	2b Early-exit transitional	3 Late-exit transitional	4a Additive	4b Additive [30]

Table 2.2. Expected scores for L2 (subject) in well-resources schools by Grade 10-12 depending on earlier language medium choices

Without seeking to cover the literature exhaustively, an impossible task given the hundreds of studies that exist[12], one more quote supporting this same point may be added: 'All available evidence shows… that continued maintenance of the mother tongue (or a national language) medium of instruction plus the teaching of the official and other foreign languages by skilled teachers will secure quality education, in Africa as much as in so-called developed countries' (Wolff, 2011, p. 72). This same idea is expressed as follows by a teacher trainer: 'When asked to describe the profile of an effective primary teacher, Ghanaian teachers placed "mastery of local language" and "knowledge and respect of the child's culture" … at the same level as "mastery of subjects and methodologies"' (Chatry-Komarek, 2003, p. 33).

11.- In this respect one may appreciate the resistance strategies employed by young Burkinabes to create their own French: http://www.unice.fr/ILF-CNRS/ofcaf/13/napon.html
These invented standards could also infiltrate spelling and spill into and simplify the old French spelling. They have simple models for their languages.

12- See also the older overview by Dutcher and Tucker (1995). Skutnabb-Kangas (2005) comments: 'There are hundreds of small-scale studies like this, from most continents, which show similar results', that is to say the very positive effect of the 'mother tongue medium education' while drawing on many works that report on the state of research. It would be a superfluous and tedious exercise to draw up an inventory of these studies here.

Nonetheless, several studies suggest that a more nuanced view is required. To start with, there is a high degree of dialectical variation in the languages. Thus, the national language of instruction may be far removed from the language actually spoken by children, as demonstrated by Tambulukani and Bus (2012) for Zambia, or Nicot-Guillorel (2009) for Madagascar. This point is substantiated by the Swiss German example. Children in this region speak dialects that are far removed from the standard written German through which they learn to read. Consequently, learning is more difficult. However, this is strongly mitigated by the fact that all the children become familiar with the standard language, through radio and especially through television, as virtually all series and films are broadcast in standard German. The impact of language standardization through mass media is an important factor that is often underestimated or ignored in studies. Furthermore, it should be noted that the mass media also produce new oral genres that powerfully enrich linguistic media.

The majority of studies on bilingual education remain at a relatively general level, providing little information concerning actual teaching practices and methodologies, and their theoretical foundations. Studies on practices do exist of course, however, as they tend to be less spectacular and clear-cut, publications in this field remain more discreet. Furthermore, they rarely emphasize the didactic point of view by examining the what is being taught, instead focusing more often on teaching practices and teacher-student relations in particular.

3. APPARENTLY SIMILAR BUT FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT SITUATIONS

Particular situations exist in various European countries in which minority languages are used on a national scale. These languages may be spoken by a significant part of the population or even by the majority in some regions.

An extensive body of literature exists on this subject, namely for the use of French in the Aosta Valley, Galician[13] in Spain, or Basque[14] and Occitan in the southwest of France. These are only a few of the minority languages found in predominantly Latin-language countries. Romansh, a Romance language spoken by about 60,000 people in Switzerland, is one such case. In the municipality of Samedan, where Romansh was for a long time the majority language, usage fell sharply due to the massive immigration of Swiss German speakers. Swiss German-speaking parents lobbied for the schools to provide instruction in what was henceforth the majority language. In response, the town decided to switch to bilingual schooling to protect the declining traditional language. The project acknowledged the cultural value of Romansh while enriching students' skill sets by having them become highly proficient in two languages. Both languages are now taught from kindergarten to the end of compulsory education at the age of 16. In early schooling, more emphasis is placed on Romansh because it is considered weaker. From the age of 12, the two languages are taught in equal proportion. Differentiation measures are used to account for differences in the students' language proficiency. All the performance and motivation indicators are positive; the use of Romansh has stabilized or is even increasing (Gurtner et al., 2007).

Switzerland provides a second example in the use of bilingual streams in the schools of Biel/Bienne. Located in the canton of Berne, Biel/Bienne, is the largest bilingual town in Switzerland. 40 per cent of the population is French-speaking and 60 per cent is German-speaking. 36.9 per cent of the population is monolingual, 32.9 per

13- Language spoken in the region of Galicia in northwest Spain.

14- Language spoken in the Spanish Basque Country in the northeast of Spain.

cent bilingual and 20.3 per cent trilingual or more. Biel/Bienne promotes bilingual education throughout schooling and financially supports projects that contribute to this goal. Various models were tested out. The concept of the bilingual stream is based on the principle of two-way immersion, whereby the teaching is balanced between both languages, both orally and in writing, and classes are composed of 50 per cent French speakers and 50 per cent German speakers. The teachers in both languages work together and share information about their students' linguistic progress. In this situation of the two-way immersion both languages enjoy the same prestige, with one difference as German in fact encompasses two distinct languages within the curriculum: standard German and the Swiss-German dialect as a secondary discipline. An example of how this works in practice is provided by the bilingual kindergarten opened by the municipality of Evilard, part of the Biel/Bienne district, in the locality of Macolin (Magglingen in German). This bilingual education project operates on the model of two-way immersion (half the class is French-speaking and class German-speaking). Teaching is done 50 per cent in French and 50 per cent in German over six half-days per week. It is provided by two teachers, one French-speaking and one German-speaking. Two mornings a week, they do class together. The rest of the time, the activities are carried out in the language of the teacher. The teaching evolves a lot over the course of a year (Hügi et al., 2006). As Straub (2014) analyses, students develop a broad range of communication strategies in their L2 (imitation, questioning, interpreting, changing language, facial expressions, etc.) that allow them to communicate even with relatively limited language skills, thus demonstrating their motivation and creativity. In her research, Buser (2012) suggests that after several years of immersion, students have comparable abilities in L2 to their monolingual peers in L1. It should be noted that similar experiments have been carried out in Fribourg and Sion[15], with highly positive results (Demierre-Wagner et al., 2004), but these are relatively costly schemes, insofar as the teachers work six and a half days a week, meaning half a day more than the standard workload, and therefore have to be remunerated accordingly.

4. WORKING ON DIFFERENT LANGUAGES: INTERESTING APPROACHES BUT ARE THEY TRANSFERABLE?

'The process of acquiring an L2 requires the identification of components in the target language, whether phonetic, morphosyntactic, lexical or pragmatic...This identification is favoured by metalinguistic skills, defined as the ability to objectify and manipulate these data (input) in an unfamiliar language. This skill is also beneficial for a familiar language or languages', comments Genelot (2001, p. 14). The exact role played by metalinguistic awareness in the acquisition of an L2 remains a subject of debate. While some researchers question how indispensable it is in acquiring a second language, they are unanimous in recognizing that it plays a beneficial role in the process (for a recent analysis of the issues related to this topic, see Leow, 2000, or Simard and Wong, 2001).

Various teaching materials have been created to develop metalinguistic skills. The activities they propose are designed to make students work on several languages, whether local languages taught at school or languages spoken by students outside the classroom. One notable example is the EOLE[16] programme, which initiated a process of reflection on language that led to the development of eight didactic sequences tested

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15- Bilingual Swiss cities.

16- Éducation et ouverture aux langues à l'école (Education and opening up to languages in school).

in five classes of French-speaking Switzerland, where French is the language of instruction (Balsiger et al., 2013[17]). The workings of the language are addressed successively in its graphophonological, phonological, lexical, syntactic and textual aspects. The activities are based on text genres, with a variety of social text genres selected from several languages: alphabet books and dictionaries, stories, recipes, DIY instructions, letters, poems and encyclopedia entries. These texts form the main thread of the language work. Building awareness of different text types takes place in the first phase, through the discovery and observation of various texts drawn from specific genres. In the second phase, the formal characteristics of the genre in question are highlighted. The third phase is devoted to a diagram that frames the genre being studied. The fourth phase initiates a reflection on the specific function of the genre. Finally, the fifth phase synthesises the various diagrams that have been produced in previous sessions and the findings on the functions of the genre. The same problem-solving exercise, referred to as a situation de recherche, is repeated for each genre. The results of the experiment showed that: 'these interlinguistic approaches had a positive influence on the perception of the diversity of languages and on the specific features of those used in this comparison-based teaching method (didactique du détour). In addition, this comparative perspective makes it easier to categorize the diversity of texts by genre and raises awareness, for example, of the problem of how to mark the plural in French.'[18]

EOLE proposes 90 texts in 26 languages, with a variety of 9 text genres. The activities are aimed at children aged from 7 to 10. Balsiger (2009) considers that the EOLE experiment conducted in classes, approaching language learning through social text genres and their recognition by students, is conclusive. The results prove that students in these classes made better progress in French compared to other classes.

5. SOME SPECIFIC ISSUES RELATED TO FRENCH AS L2 AND AFRICAN LANGUAGES AS L1

As Bialystok et al. (2005) show, transfers of reading and writing abilities from one language to another can only occur if the languages are similar. Are national languages in Africa similar to the official languages? They virtually all rely on an alphabetic system, but there is no denying that significant divergences exist, the proportion of phonograms, morphograms and logograms being very different. One might jokingly say that African countries were unlucky to inherit French and English as languages of colonization. They may well be highly prestigious languages, used by many speakers around the world (respectively 75 and 335 million L1 speakers[19]), but they share a major problem in that both have non-transparent orthography.

17- http://www.irdp.ch/eole/eole_txts_fdl/index.html

18- http://www.irdp.ch/eole/eole_txts_fdl/index.html

19- http://www.ethnologue.com/language/fra and http://www.ethnologue.com/language/eng
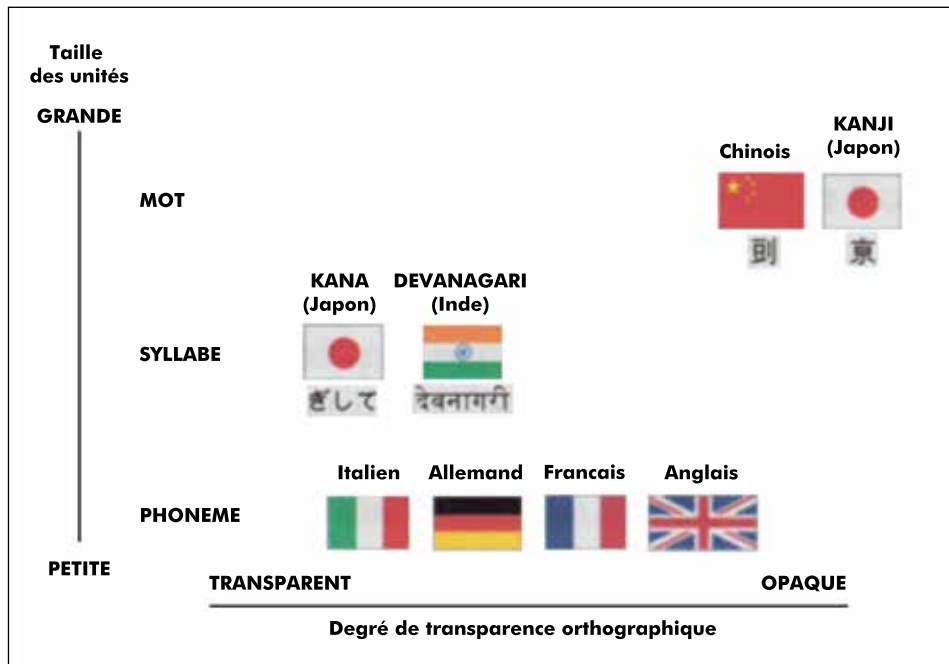
Figure 2.2: Orthographic transparency (Dehaene, 2007 p. 163)

As shown in the above diagram, French and English are located to the far right of a horizontal axis running from transparent to opaque. On this scale, African languages would all be placed close to Italian, where one would also find Spanish for example, making it easier for Latin American countries to learn the language. The degree of opacity of a language has an important influence on the process of learning to read when it comes to constructing grapheme-phoneme correspondences.
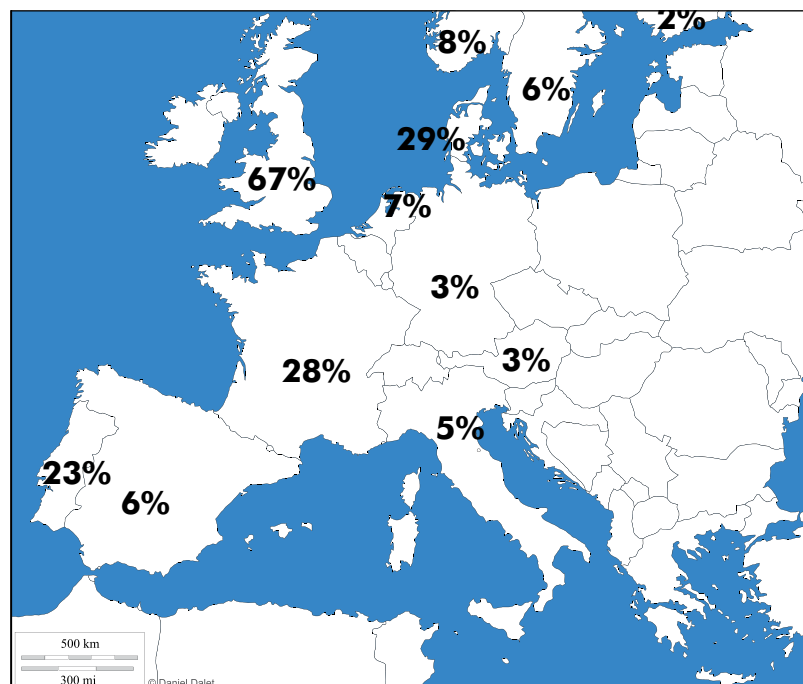
Figure 2.3: Rate of errors in word reading at the end of first grade (Seymour et al., 2003; cited by Dehaene 2007, p. 306)

Research has shown that the Spanish students only make six per cent of errors in word reading at the end of first grade, compared to 28 per cent for French children and 67 per cent in the UK. Needless to say, difficulties related to the opacity of a language have significant implications for learning.

Where methods used in the teaching of African languages are concerned, as Trudell and Schroeder (2008) point out, European languages still have a powerful prestige as media of instruction. The methods used to teach English or French are also considered to be the most fitting to apply to any other language. Those responsible for developing methods better adapted to African languages and their associated sociocultural context struggle to break free from these dominant models. Indeed, reading methods in African languages generally ignore the linguistic properties of these languages. This makes access to reading more difficult for an entire segment of society that is already marginalized, the illiterate speakers of African languages. In order to improve this population's proficiency in and increase their use of written language, the challenge for African teachers is to transpose European methods to African languages. Given the dominance of the 'shallow' writing system used for these languages, it would seem to make sense to take the characteristics of this system into consideration in methods of reading instruction. A case in point: 'Readers of Bantu languages encounter a distinct challenge with the long words produced by Bantu verbal structure and word-break rules … frequent exposure to a series of letters which bond together phonologically can aid recognition of a long series of letters. With practice, the associations between ordered pairs of letters become encoded in memory as a cohesive, ordered sequence. Not only so, but the multisyllabic nature of most Bantu words is not actually as daunting as it may seem. The syllable patterns facilitate the associations between letters, by making combinations of letters predictable' (Trudell and Schroeder, 2008, p. 169)[20]. Such observations will have consequences for the didactic strategy that is adopted.

6. ACCESS TO WRITTEN CULTURE: METHODS OF INSTRUCTION

In bilingual instruction, the principle of starting instruction in the language spoken by the children is often invoked. However, judging by the example of the SIL[21] site, which compiles a large body of research, there are few studies that explain methods in their practical application, provide detailed descriptions of the theoretical foundations of methods of reading and writing instruction, or deal with theories of text. Regarding practical analysis, as Alidou and Brock-Utne (2006, p. 85) point out: 'Minimal observational studies are conducted in African classrooms to show how teaching impacts on learning'. This subchapter will take stock of a number of studies that are particularly interesting from this point of view.

20- These remarks call to mind certain aspects of the earlier study by Houis and Bole Richard (1977) in which the authors attempted to define a 'typology and pedagogy' of African languages based on the problems they potentially posed for reading instruction. Houis and Bole Richard distinguish between languages that are morphematically 'economic' (e.g. Bambara) and languages that are morphematically differentiated (Wolof, Fula, Swahili and other Bantu languages), many languages being intermediary. This analysis could then lead to similar teaching strategies: 'The teacher working in Brazzaville with Bantu-speaking students, like the teacher working in Dori with Fula-speaking students, will be able to apply a number of linguistic principles and a similar pedagogical strategy, either to teach an African language or for purposes of contrast with another language such as English or French' (p. 70).

21- http://www.silcam.org/folder030401/page.php

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

A first, relatively general principle is emphasized by many authors: defining a specific progression for reading in syllabi. SIL research in West Africa highlights two important points. 'Reading instruction needs to be addressed specifically in the curriculum. Too often, reading instruction is subsumed under the curriculum subject of "language". Yet, improved proficiency in a first or a second language is not at all the same as the acquisition of reading and writing skills. The curriculum needs to reflect that fact, and space must be given to reading instruction in a language that the child speaks fluently.' (Trudell et al., 2012, p. 21).

As demonstrated by Faundez et al. (2012, p. 42 et seq.), the Pedagogy of the Text approach, far from contradicting these proposals, radicalizes them. Based on experiments with this method in Guatemala and Burkina Faso, its representatives seek 'to overcome certain misconceptions about bilingual education, particularly in francophone Africa, which constitute real obstacles to working more effectively: i) L2 can only be introduced when learners are fully proficient in calculation, writing and reading in their mother tongue; ii) when teaching L2, L1 must be put aside and vice versa; iii) teaching both languages simultaneously makes learning difficult.' They propose the following approach: 'in the first year, the fact of alternating between L1 and L2 for instruction of non-linguistic disciplines represents an important qualitative leap in learning these languages. Indeed, the use of L2 as a language of instruction from the outset, on an equal footing to the mother tongue, becomes a more crucial qualitative factor in improving performances in L1 and L2 than merely extending exposure time to either language as a subject. This is proven by the fact that students who followed this approach in Guatemala can easily integrate into the classic (official language) monolingual school system with good L2 performances while continuing to score well orally and in writing in their native language.' Perregaux (1994, p. 32), seems to provide a linguistic foundation for this approach stating: 'The bilingual child manifests an overall, unique and specific language proficiency that is difficult to break down into two or three monolingual skills.'

THE PROBLEM OF L2 AND THE INITIATION INTO WRITING

A second principle is often mentioned regarding the status of L2. As Trudell (2013, p. 159) points out, two aspects are of particular relevance in relation to L2: 'Learning to read and learning a second language are two separate processes. Combining the two processes retards the learning of both. Treating them as separate cognitive activities, supported by appropriate methods and materials, enhances learning considerably.' This notably implies that 'Second language acquisition needs to be respected as a key component of the curriculum. Language learning must be intentional. It must not be assumed that the child will "pick up" the language without explicit and careful instruction' (Trudell et al., 2012, p. 21). This has clear repercussions for teaching methods. Indeed, as Alidou et al. (2006, p. 77) note:

> The design flaw is that insufficient attention is paid to the cognitive development and needs of the African language-speaking child/learner…This results in an extremely serious error: the use of English/French/Portuguese second language programmes for a purpose for which they were not intended. The objective is to teach the second language (as a subject), but they are not meant to prepare students to learn through the medium of the second language.

Vigner (2001) points out some further aspects. First, he refers to the difficulty L2 learners have in ordering words when composing sentences. This syntactic dimension is rarely considered where reading instruction is concerned. L2 learners seem to have difficultly 'grouping words into functional sets', yet, Vigner argues, this an essential aspect of reading comprehension. The vocabulary question presents an additional difficulty for L2 learners of French. Information is processed more slowly than in L1, because the 'activation of the relevant concepts' (p. 45) is processed by a bilingual lexicon to sort between relevant and non-relevant concepts.

Furthermore, Vigner recommends an approach to writing in L2 that is very progressive, even advocating an exclusively oral approach in early learning (without going directly into the graphophonemic system and the acquisition of the code). For example, he suggests an introduction to writing in L2 through the analysis of the functions and uses of writing in social contexts, i.e. observing written culture as it exists in a given context, such as found in city streets (billboards, posters, labels on certain objects, etc.). He contends that 'starting children off with deciphering or writing exercises when the language is still foreign to them makes no sense. It is the surest way of putting them in difficulty' (p. 46).

Establishing distance from the mother tongue is also necessary. This should apply primarily to children who come from traditional oral societies. The practice of orality, Vigner explains, 'is not only about functional convenience, but constitutes a way of relating to the other and the world that is distinct from the one that prevails in writing-based societies' (p. 47).

Finally, Vigner proposes an interesting categorization of the different dimensions to be considered when teaching a second language:

1. Introduction to the world of writing:
Forms.
Places.
Uses.
Speakers.

2. Writing codes:
Analysis of the sound string.
Phonological code.
Orthographic code.
Morphological code.

3. Syntactical aspects:
Word order in the sentence.
Segmentation of the sentence.
Punctuation.

4. Textual aspects:
Forms of texts.
Thematic continuities.
Components and structure of contents.

5. Textual universe:
Genres.
Discursive functions.
Enunciation.
Registers.
Represented worlds.

TEACHING METHODS

Bearing these general principles in mind, the following section takes a more detailed look at the methodological components used for classroom work in bilingual education, most of which can also be applied to L2 instruction in monolingual education[22].

In seeking to define the origins of the difficulties impeding access to reading, Klaas and Trudell (2011) cite Abadzi (2011) (also cited by ELAN: 2010, 2011), who stresses the importance of the time devoted to teaching, practice and feedback. More specifically, Abadzi (2012) speaks of a 'scientific chain of causality', which would appear to have a negative effect on student performances, especially on students from low-income backgrounds. She makes a number of recommendations to address these causalities:

- Teaching letters one by one, every 1-2 days (local languages rather than English, French, Portuguese).
- Pattern detection (ka ke ki ek ak ik).
- Ensuring that students actually see blackboard print.
- Fat textbooks for all, about 4,000 words for practice, respecting critical print size and spacing.
- Intensive practice to reduce reaction time, activate visual word form area sufficiently.
- Even 15 seconds of feedback for all.
- Effective teacher training (e.g. through videos).
- Time use for instruction and practice.'

Few reading programmes, Abadzi concludes, incorporate all these indispensable activities.

Here, it is worth recalling the point raised by Klaas and Trudell (2011), that students don't learn to read through graphophonemic correspondence alone. They must also be able to recognize morphological units, especially in languages in which these morphemes, which are often agglutinative, play an important role (see study cited above). This view is supported by Maurer (2010, p. 175) who insists on the fact that: 'If we want to establish a didactics of multilingualism(s), we must start by constructing a didactics of African languages as first languages. This will entail starting everything from scratch. What does it mean to teach Bambara as a mother tongue? What paradigms should be used?'. He elaborates on this idea, stating that, in his view, what is required is a process that 'avoids both the error of an overly descriptive, prescriptive grammatical teaching approach (that might too easily veer into a transmission-based, doctrinaire mode of teaching African languages – leading to ossification and rigidity rather than the desired linguistic 'fluidity') and the even worse solution of using these languages strictly for communicative purposes in schools.' He therefore proposes that students be taught to 'better communicate in one of the languages used in their environment while developing skills that are not exercised in the natural environment: while this is an obvious approach in writing exercises, whether in reception or production, it is important to reflect on the development of oral skills that do not conflict with the place traditionally attributed to children in these societies'. The latter point may be wishful thinking, even in partial contradiction with the role of school, which is precisely to open students up to new spaces and new forms of communication.

22- The approach proposed by ELAN will be examined in more detail at a later stage, mainly in Chapter 6 on Niger.

One way this openness is manifested is by helping students understand how their first language functions (through the analysis of oral or written corpuses), while explaining that it is not the model of every language. The next step is then to focus on points that one already knows will be treated differently by the L2. This strategy introduces a dialectic into the representation of languages, potential forms of which are suggested by the methods proposed by EOLE (presented above), for example.

Trudell and Schroeder (2008) identify a series of practical measures to overcome the 'pedagogical imperialism' that results from the failure to take into account the specificities of African languages:

- Early work on phonological awareness.
- Exercises on syllable recognition.
- Variation in the spelling of different morphemes (at a later stage).
- Learning to detect the position of the morpheme in a word and in a sentence.
- Exercises based on connecting a long series of syllables or morphemes in words.

This range of strategies, to teach reading and writing in a specific context, can be expanded to incorporate strategies common to all languages: reading silently and aloud, or activities that prioritize comprehension using appropriate and varied texts.

Briquet-Duhazé (2014) comments on a West African teacher training programme that focuses more specifically on classroom activities that work on phonological awareness (including phonological awareness of letter names as a way to help 8 to 10-year-old students with reading difficulties), the vocabulary to be acquired, and grapheme/phoneme combinations. A training module was especially developed using student-teacher dictation and classroom group work. Developing this tool requires a solid scientific contribution and for tools to be provided during the training, such as the list of the most common phonemes, the most commonly used words, and the lexical abilities to be worked on. This training programme also requires time for reflection. For example, if teachers work on the most frequently used words in L2, they also need to work on the most frequently used words in their L1. More generally, it is essential to take into account the teachers' real level of training as they often do not have sufficient knowledge of the workings of African languages (or of French). This knowledge is necessary to create and implement activities for the students to work on, so they can grasp the language's rules.

Concerning a more tangible presentation of methods, one may cite the PRAESA project in South Africa (Trudell et al., 2012, p. 17 et seq.). The researchers observed that teachers were poorly trained, that there was little presence of the written language, including in L1, and that the available books were mostly in English. To change practices, they proposed the following concrete measures:

- Creating a print-rich environment.
- Creating materials in the students' mother tongue.
- Systematically using L1 as the language of instruction and teaching L2 as a second language while fostering biliteracy.
- Creating an interactive journal to train teachers.

In terms of the curriculum, Trudell et al. (2012, p. 18) more precisely describe their approach: 'Teachers were encouraged to situate their phonics lessons within the context of whole, meaningful texts. Thus they needed to plan

and prepare the text to be used (rhymes, songs, story extracts, etc.), deciding which language it should be in, and then what they should do with the text for that particular lesson. They were mentored in how to do "shared-and-paired reading", how to prepare and tell stories, and how to read to and with children on a daily basis, using both the mother tongue and English' This principle is also highlighted by Trudell (2013, p. 159): 'We need to change how we think about reading and writing, focusing more on understanding. Understanding means, among other things, using the language the students speak and understand. It also means using reading methods that fit the language of the classroom rather than methods that have been designed for international languages.'

Trudell et al. (2012, p. 18 et seq.) insist on the fact that the teaching should not be limited to reading, but include writing, in the two languages of instruction. In concrete terms, this is to be done in accordance with the following principles:

- Encouraging and supporting writing (emergent writing, using invented writing), through interactive letter and journal writing strategies in the mother tongue and English
- The use of writing frames
- The exploration of different writing genres

These principles are clearly explained and asserted by the 'Pedagogy of Text' group (Faundez et al., 2012), who place them in a historical perspective. While noting a lack of knowledge concerning how African languages function as texts, they insist on the fact that the functional method, just like the consciousness-raising method, are insufficiently effective, since they are limited to reading without any connection to writing. Despite the progress they represent, from a pedagogical point of view both are founded on a repetition-based conception of teaching and learning. Furthermore, Faundez et al. (2012) observe that these methods 'adhere to a conception of language as a code and focus the teaching and learning of written language on the study of the meaningless 'micro-universe' (syllables, words)' (p. 19). This stance is reflected in the approach it advocates to writing instruction: 'Writing is appropriated neither through a cumulative progression that starts with micro-units (writing system, vocabulary and grammar) culminating in the study of texts, nor by meaningless exercises disconnected from learning new knowledge. Unlike traditional approaches, the first step is not to learn the writing system, vocabulary and grammar before working with texts. This knowledge develops, from the start of the educational process, by using texts as the objects of teaching and learning. This development is always founded, first, on existing knowledge (or representations) of written language and, second, on non-language content. The new contribution of these texts, in terms of content, stems from the disciplines selected for study and the knowledge they contain. The challenge therefore is to get learners to actively participate in producing, reading and listening to texts from the start of the learning process' (p. 39 et seq.).

This radically text-based approach immediately brings to light a fundamental problem, which the authors point out, but do not discuss in further detail. Insisting that no text should be produced in just one language, they state that 'one must avoid applying the models (text genres) of European languages to local languages.' In addition to the issue of vocabulary sometimes lacking for certain technical or scientific content, this raises the even more acute problem of the existence of specialized textual genres for different language functions in specific and varied communication situations. A problem that is almost never addressed in the explored literature.

CHAPTER 2

PRACTICES

While pointing to the lack of studies that deal with actual practices in schools, Alidou and Brock-Utne (2006) nonetheless draw some essential conclusions from the existing research regarding classroom observations:

- As children do not speak the language of instruction, teachers are forced to use traditional teaching techniques, such as chorus teaching, individual repetition and memorization. Recall is characterized by 'the encouragement of chorus answers from pupils, repeating phrases or words after the teacher and copying notes from the blackboard' (Rubagumya, 2003, p. 162).
- Teachers frequently use the code switching strategy, to go from the language spoken by students at home to the medium of formal instruction.

Conversely, when teaching in L1, as Bergmann comments (Bergmann et al. 2002, p. 62, quoted by Alidou and Brock-Utne, 2006) following classroom observations: 'In general, teachers do not do most of the talking. They let the pupils express themselves very often in the elementary classes and sometimes in the other classes as well. Up to the fourth year of primary school, traditional school teachers do this a lot less than their peers in the experimental schools.' Bergmann's remarks also show that as soon as French dominates (early exit), teachers return to a traditional educational model, also in the mother tongue. Furthermore, Alidou and Brock-Utne (2006, p. 56) point out that there is some resistance from teachers: 'These teachers believe that pupils who express themselves freely in the classroom are impolite.' This is probably due to the fact they speak up more, suggest the authors.

This systematic presentation of classroom practices, as interesting as it is, remains broad and mostly deals with aspects that might be qualified as 'pedagogical', namely teacher-student relations, without considering the object of instruction. The following section looks more specifically at student practices and abilities observed in the classroom. The first analyses are drawn from the MoDyCo project, headed by Colette Noyau, which undertakes precise studies of classroom practices [23].

Cissé[24] (2013) notes that the transfer of knowledge between L1 and L2 is not straightforward, even if students already have a good command of reading in L1 (Bamanankan, in this precise case). He cites a series of difficulties encountered by students, including issues with decoding, pronunciation (pronunciation of the mute e) and punctuation rules. Cissé attributes these results to a problem of transferring reading knowledge from the first language to French, the L2. This problem would seem to stem from teaching methods that do not account for issues of transfer when learning in L1. On the basis of these classroom observations, Cissé draws the following conclusion: the most efficient approach is to take into consideration the lack of phonographemic correspondence between the languages. This requires studying the letters in both languages in parallel. Those common to Bamanankan and French are to be studied orally and in writing. This will help students to understand that some letters have the same form in both languages, but distinct sounds. These activities should foster awareness of the irregularity of grapheme/phoneme correspondences. The above-mentioned exercises are to be practiced in both languages. There must be regular transition from one language to another, based on the L1, to facilitate

23- http://www.modyco.fr/corpus/transferts/journees-2013.html

24-Oumar Cissé (Mali): Apprentissage de lecture à l'école primaire bilingue (bamanankan-français) face aux enjeux du transfert "Transferts d'apprentissage et mise en regard des langues et des savoirs à l'école bilingue : du point de vue des élèves aux activités de classe", Ouagadougou, Thursday 21 and Friday 22 November 2013, conference organized on the occasion of the annual plenary session of November 2013 for the plurilateral research project AUF + OIF 2011-2014 (Burkina – France – Mali – Niger) http://www.modyco.fr/corpus/transferts/

the learning of the L2. Bilingual textbooks should be used (in the absence of which, both languages should be represented on the blackboard).

Meanwhile, in Burkina Faso, Keita[25] (2013) calls attention to the fact that vocabulary is not on the programme in bilingual schools for the first two years of schooling. The objectives of vocabulary teaching in the L1 consist of knowing how words are formed (root, radical), knowing how to write words correctly, working on meaning, synonyms, opposites and derivatives, using the studied words and phrases, and being able to construct sentences with the studied words. The teaching method uses sentences or text containing the words to be learned. From Grade 3 to Grade 5, there are two specific sessions devoted to vocabulary in the L2, through reading exercises, as well as intermittent vocabulary work in other disciplines. The vocabulary learning objectives are equivalent in L1 and L2. Keita observes difficulties teaching vocabulary both orally and in writing. These have to do with the explanation of words with more than one meaning, the issue of the use and treatment of loan words, and the abundance of phonetic variations in L1. A lack of reference materials such as glossaries and dictionaries is highlighted. Keita also comments on the fact that teachers are not always sufficiently proficient in the L1 they teach. Therefore, teachers are lacking in the ability to transfer from L1 to L2 except through translation. As for the learners, Keita observes difficulties pronouncing the words and phrases taught, difficulties constructing sentences, confusion between sounds and words, and problems with the use of loan words.

Another series of classroom observations was conducted in a detailed study by Nicot-Guillorel (2010), as part of her voluminous dissertation on bilingual reading and writing instruction in Madagascar. She sat in on teaching sessions as an observer and recorded what the teachers said during these sessions using the self-confrontation method. The objective was to identify invariants in the teacher's actions and describe 'professional measures' implemented to teach reading. Analysis of the collected data shows that students are never allowed to discover a text on their own to understand its meaning. The sessions systematically begin with a reading by the teacher that directly 'reveals' the meaning of the text. Students are not encouraged to try to understand the text by themselves. On average, more than half the lesson time is devoted to individual reading, with a focus on correct pronunciation, for fluent and expressive reading. The smaller children must read memorized sentences so that the teacher can assess whether or not they have mastered syllabic segmentation. The teachers help the students by showing them the right way to read when they make mistakes. This effect of this ritual is that student activity essentially focuses on imitation rather than on exploration, searching and categorization. When it comes to working on comprehension, teachers ask questions phrased in such a way as to yield answers that can be found almost word for word in the text. There are few questions that require students to make inferences from the text. Moreover, teachers do not work on strategies to develop students' understanding of the text. These practices induce a dichotomous approach to reading instruction that identifies words through sampling and guides the understanding of a text through the external supervision of an adult instead of fostering a process of self-monitoring among students. As noted by Nicot-Guillorel: 'current school routines restrict students to systems of processing texts that are not very conducive to reading independently.' She identifies a 'professional development zone' to be explored by teachers so as to better help learner readers acquire an independent understanding of writing during primary school. However, the question of providing support for the exploration of this zone 'remains open' (p. 402).

25 - http://www.modyco.fr/corpus/transferts/pdf/Keita-presentation-vocabulaire.pdf

KEY POINTS

From the vast available literature, a small sample of which was presented here by way of illustration, one can draw a series of conclusions. The first conclusions are general and simply repeat what is stated today in most of the listed reports and studies. The latter contain more concise recommendations. They will be further analysed in Part 2 and Part 3 of this report.

1. In line with international trends from which a growing consensus is emerging, initiation into writing must take place in the mother tongue. This is essential in order to avoid turning reading instruction into a mechanical transcoding exercise, but also to give students access to written culture as a communication-based language activity used for comprehension and the production of meaning.

2. As the context of sub-Saharan Africa is characterized by a very rich multilingualism, the presence of many languages whose written culture is sometimes still underdeveloped and an education system whose secondary and higher level curricula are oriented towards a so-called official language, in this case French, the need for bilingual education is clear.

3. Regardless of the mode of instruction (monolingual or bilingual), French should be treated as a genuine second language. The teaching method cannot and should not follow the usual methodologies in L1, for two reasons:

- Instruction in the second language takes place in parallel to the initiation into written culture; in other words, students both learn a new language and learn how to write; writing in the second language works differently from writing in the first language (opaque versus transparent);
- The second language will ultimately become the language of instruction providing access to knowledge in different disciplines.

4. The particular characteristics of the sub-Saharan situation are such that the bilingual education experiments piloted in many countries cannot be transposed to this specific context. However, what can be transposed are certain language-comparison methods such as those developed in programmes like EOLE. These methods are applicable in both bilingual and monolingual education. In the latter case, there is the possibility of working on the national language (or languages) spoken by the students.

5. Regardless of the mode of instruction (bilingual or monolingual), the initiation into written culture involves working on various levels: in particular, on writing practices, the code, syntax and vocabulary, text structure and the variety of text types. It is essential to progress simultaneously on all levels.

6. This does not mean, however, that all these dimensions are always required at the same time. Quite the contrary, it is recommended to clearly distinguish between moments spent working on texts that can be quite complex, to *understand* through listening activities and to *produce* through child-to-adult dictation. For example, this means devoting moments to *discovering* simple texts adapted to the students' abilities, and moments to working on the code through systematic drills and *exercises*, always in both languages.

7. For the first language, particularly for languages whose written culture is still underdeveloped and not very present in the environment, creating a written culture in the school context is paramount. This implies establishing a corpus of texts of diverse genres and various complexities, so as to contribute to the 'intellectualization of languages' at the school level.

8. In a bilingual programme, instruction in both languages should not be limited to reading, but from an early stage include activities to produce different forms of written texts: writing words, child-to-adult dictations, composition of texts with given words, etc., based wherever possible on communication situations in the classroom and on different genres.

9. In a bilingual programme where French is the second language, the teaching methods should be adapted accordingly. Given, on the one hand, the opaque nature of French spelling and the fact that the students only have rudimentary proficiency in the language, and, on the other, that students have access to written culture primarily through their first language, the instruction can focus on the different coding principles and on the use of the language orally in real teaching situations in academic disciplines. As it happens, this an excellent way to work on vocabulary.

10. In the case of a monolingual French programme, there is a need to develop teaching methods that are not modelled on the usual methods of teaching a second language. As the students are continuously immersed in French, since the latter is the language of instruction, it is important to take advantage of this teaching. However, one must remain aware of its limitations from the point of view of the comprehension of the texts to be read and difficulties of access to reading comprehension.

11. It is essential to develop teaching structures *before* the initiation into writing, meaning before Grade 1, so that children can be initiated into the French language in communication situations that are as diverse as possible (games, storytelling, short explanations, etc.).

12. The context of the class can function as a communication situation for learning French.

13. The use of national vehicular languages in teaching situations in French should be preferred, whenever possible.

CHAPTER **3**

LEARNING TO READ IN CONTEXTS WITH PARTICULAR DIDACTIC CONSTRAINTS
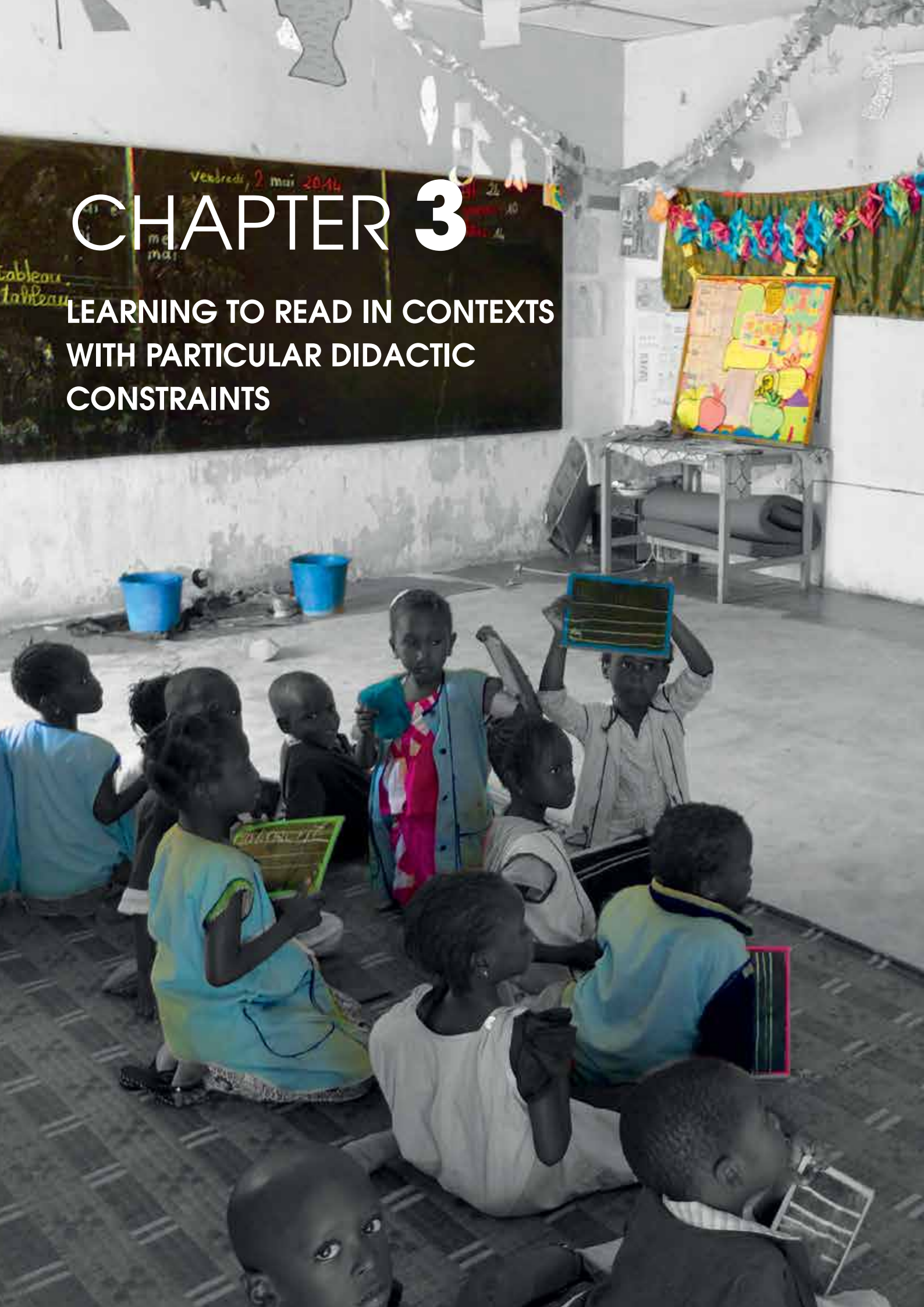
To paraphrase Chevallard (2012, p. 141), a didactic system that brings together someone who does something to teach something to someone else (for example students), is situated within a comprehensive system, a school, which is itself inserted in society. These different levels will mutually determine each other and define didactic constraints that impact the different components of the didactic system. Some of these constraints have been analysed in the previous chapters. In Chapter 1, they stem from the way in which the discipline of French is defined from the perspective of early writing instruction. They also have to do with the different dimensions of the student's learning process such as they are taken or not taken into account by the teacher's action, and, at the heart of the student-teacher relationship, the knowledge the teaching system has defined to transform the students' mental processes. Chapter 2 more specifically addresses the constraints imposed by a multilingual context that entail choices on several levels: that of the languages present in a society; that of the characterizations of these languages and the resulting relationship to them; finally, that of the organization of teaching in relation to the social and academic characteristics of the multilingual situation.

This short chapter seeks to highlight a more specific set of constraints that can be observed in the African context and must be taken into account so as to avoid mechanically transferring models that work in other contexts. These constraints, adding to those discussed in Chapter 2, are more specifically related to the broad and complex issue of the effects of multilingualism on teaching for the initiation into writing. The factors considered in the following section are regularly discussed in the literature.

1. TEACHER TRAINING

This point will not be developed in detail here as it is covered extensively in the three individual country studies.

While the issue of training is of course important, it is also a common leitmotif of all reform efforts worldwide. Without wishing in any way to minimize the importance of teacher training, which is an essential factor for the progress of education systems, it is too easy to focus on training alone. Any reform must be designed for the teachers already in place, who can obviously be trained, but certainly not transformed. The work on explaining the structure of a didactic sequence and presenting the objectives being pursued are two essential factors in organizing instruction. These components depend on a clear understanding of the approach being proposed while making this approach possible in the first place.

2. EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

Trudell et al. (2012) point out that 'Reading materials of sufficient quantity, quality and variety serve a significant role in successful early grade literacy acquisition. In particular, materials with appropriate stories to read aloud to children, and those which are used for shared and paired reading, enhance language and literacy development'. The *variety* of texts is a particularly important factor, worth highlighting (Faundez et al., 2012).

It is instrumental in certain study programmes that, from the early stages of reading instruction, recognize the need to focus on more than one genre. More generally, there are few or no means to familiarize students with written culture: libraries, literature other than textbooks, non-fiction books, etc. This raises two key problems:

- As noted above, many African languages have not developed a written culture, making it difficult or even impossible to implement this essential recommendation; the immense undertaking of intellectualizing language, as Alexander puts it (Alexander and Basuch, 2007), can only be achieved by generations themselves already educated in their first language. However, assuming this undertaking can be accomplished, one cannot underestimate the economic and financial factors of: publishing, printing and distributing books in dozens of languages. It is in all likelihood an impossible challenge for countries dealing with particularly difficult material circumstances. As is done in several languages, probably the best approach is to concentrate the effort of 'intellectualization' on the main languages. However, one cannot expect these efforts to immediately produce results. This also means that even in the long term, a written culture will be constructed for a number of African languages, but probably not for all. The question of the necessary presence of the written culture for the teaching work in the classroom must take these constraints and realities into account. The report will come back to this point in the country studies.

- At a much simpler and more prosaic level, it would be desirable for each student to at least possess his or her own reading book. Abadzi (2011) goes even further, calling for 'plentiful amounts of materials for students to practice with and take home'. The personal relationship with books should not be underestimated: it materializes, so to speak, a relationship with writing that must be constructed. It also brings writing into the daily life of the family. But here again, of course, material constraints may prevent this.

Three other essential components for working on writing may be mentioned. The absence of these components strongly restricts what is didactically possible.

- The blackboard: this is a universal tool with a long history (Nonnon, 2000); it is a particularly effective way of 'making present' or 'presentifying' the object of study that is common to the class. It is advantageous in that it can be wiped clean, and therefore be transformed according to changing objects of study and the environments created to appropriate them. But there is a flipside to this advantage: the lack of durability. The objects of study disappear; the blackboard does not constitute a permanent physical record.

- Posters, materials for display, etc. produced by teachers: as mentioned in Chapter 1, the presence of writing in the classroom, the materialized record of what has been learned, seen, read and said is crucial for two reasons: first, precisely as a record to which students can constantly refer even when the objects of study are no longer on the blackboard; second, so that the class will become an admittedly limited but nevertheless real setting of written culture. The omnipresence of writing in the classroom could offset a certain absence in everyday life. But once again one cannot exclude the possibility that financial difficulties may prevent the transformation of the classroom into a place of written culture.

- As also mentioned above: written culture forms a whole that encompasses reading and writing as well as formal speech. For writing, two types of media can be considered, both functioning quite similarly to

the blackboard and posters. On the one hand, *erasable surfaces*, such as slate or other materials. In addition to their huge advantage of being reusable and cheap, these media have the didactic benefit of letting the mistake or malformed letter be easily removed; the blackboard is also particularly well suited to exercises that do not require a written record to be kept beyond its immediate use. Conversely, *individual copybooks* (Chartier and Fox, 2000), in which students can write, leave a continuous, lasting record: they contain the students' institutionalized knowledge and their original 'works'. The copybook is also part of the written culture that is preserved, while being able to go back and forth from school to family life, within the everyday environment. However, the question is whether material circumstances allow for each student to be equipped with these basic materials along with the writing tools that go with them, such as pens, pencils and chalk. The lack of availability of these tools is a didactic constraint that cannot be overlooked.

3. NUMBER OF STUDENTS AND ANNUAL DURATION OF STUDIES

The average number of students in the observed classrooms was 50. This figure, which is probably a low estimate of the usual class size, has an impact on the types of teaching systems that can be implemented, particularly in the area of oral instruction. This high number of children per class also affects the space available in the school, the movements that are possible in the classrooms, keeping discipline, and so on. In addition, the length of the school year is often shortened (for example, classes in straw huts where lessons stop when the rainy season starts or situations where the school year starts late return due to harvest work) that has a strong impact on progress, school routines and year-long planning.

4. PEDAGOGICAL MYTHS

Discourse on education may also be a constraint: it directs and channels the action of teachers, prevents certain methods and favours others. Here, the expression 'pedagogical myth' is used to designate self-proclaimed principles that often have more to do with ideology than actual effectiveness, particularly in difficult contexts, some of whose aspects have just been described.

The myth of overall meaning at all costs. Many studies, texts and recommendations emphasize a conception of school work where every object of study must fit into an all-encompassing whole, into a situation that is considered to make sense. As if meaning were only to be found in the overall activity. A typical example is the work done on a sound/phoneme, which is practiced on a word in a typical sentence, itself part of a text. In ideological terms, everything functions as if the work on the phoneme and its corresponding grapheme derived its meaning in the overall activity of reading a text.

It seems didactically more effective to define clearly delimited and separate objects of study that have meaning in themselves. Clearly different texts responding to distinct objectives are required: texts that are constructed (or texts to be written, or to be broken down and built back up again) so as to be deciphered, where the objective is to work on the code; other texts selected for comprehension work, including complex texts (in conjunction with the construction of texts through child-to-adult dictation). The purpose of this approach is to construct

new skills whose meaning is grasped by the students. Indeed, the objective will be all the clearer to them in that tasks and texts are precisely distinguished. This point was already raised in Chapter 1.

The importance of doing exercise drills. In conjunction with the goal of achieving global meaning, one quite often finds a strongly asserted refusal of exercises and repetition (with continuous variation of course to ensure progress and the students' self-assessment of their progress). The meaning of repetition and exercises may be more readily apparent and understandable to students when they know they must assimilate certain routines. Simple, transparent situations more easily clarify the learning objectives than a succession of diverse activities whose logic is difficult to grasp and where the purpose of the teaching becomes vague.

Innovation is not to be found in overall meaning as much as it is in the intelligent breakdown of content. The sequence and progression of this breakdown are developed from the material to be worked on as well as from the students' abilities and their own logic of construction. In other words: innovation must primarily be didactic in the relationship between knowledge, teacher and students, and less pedagogical, namely in the general and abstract method (e.g. group work in general, independently of a specific content for which a given form has meaning). Furthermore, this method must be based on a discourse concerning the relationship to the student that should also be meaningful outside of study, which may end up serving a utilitarian purpose.

KEY POINTS

To sum up, the following recommendations concerning the material and conceptual constraints of teaching may be defined.

1. A special effort must be made to create an environment in which writing is strongly present, in order to partially offset its absence in the students' daily lives.

2. This can be done by simple means within the space of the classroom where writing must be displayed permanently and in varied ways; teachers can regularly remind students of the writing on display and how it is a useful tool for their reading activities.

3. At the individual level, owning books and copybooks is one way of materially representing writing and building a more concrete and intimate relationship with this mode of communication.

4. The initiation of students into written culture needs to operate at very different levels. While these levels all interact, it is not always necessary to connect them. It is always possible to work relatively independently on a given level; thus one can work intensely, but more easily, on some competencies in a favourable environment designed to render exercises meaningful, rather than reduce them to pointless mechanical drills.
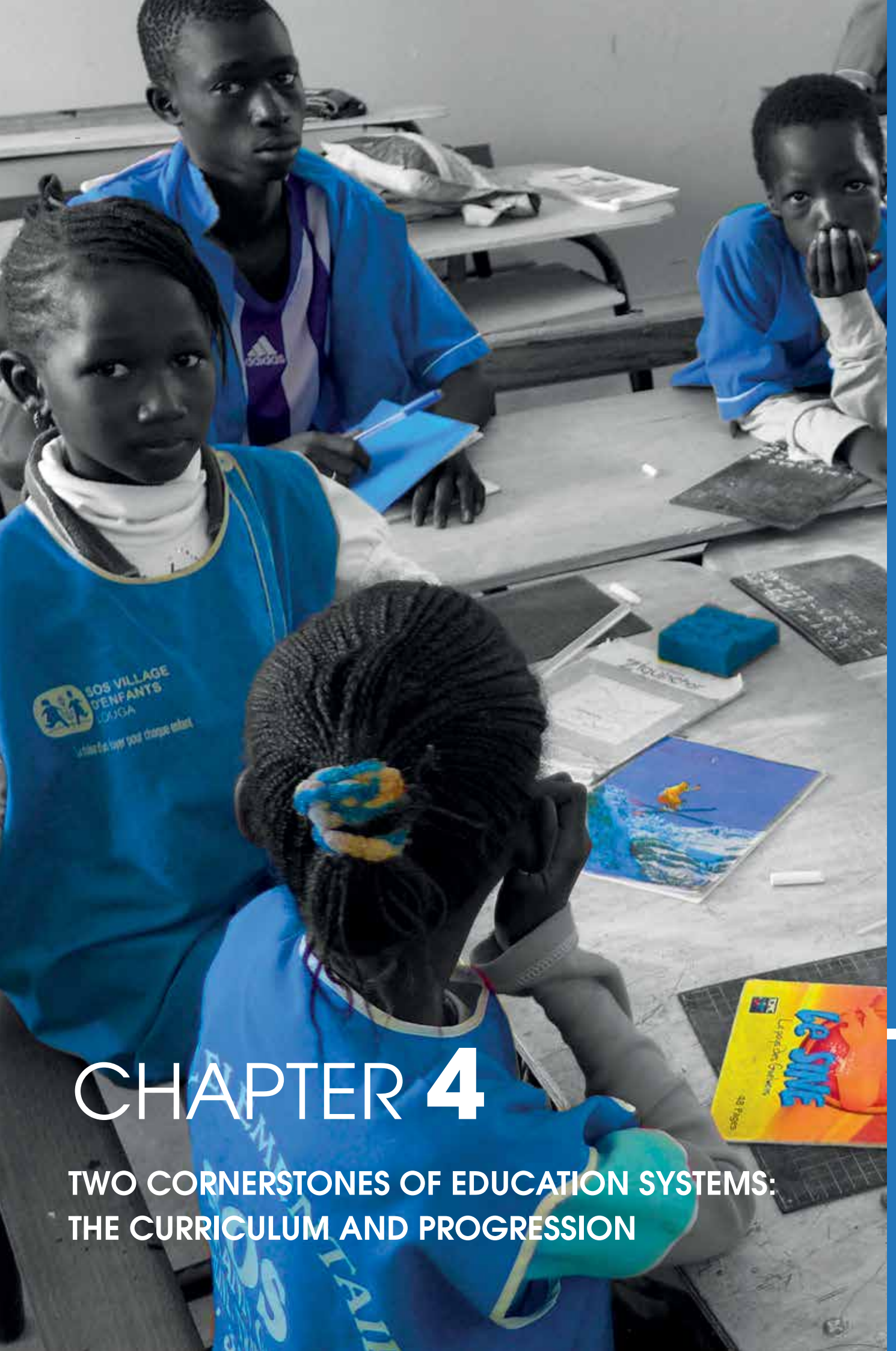
CHAPTER **4**

**TWO CORNERSTONES OF EDUCATION SYSTEMS:
THE CURRICULUM AND PROGRESSION**

CHAPTER 4..

The concept of *curriculum* emerged in the second half of the twentieth century (Audigier et al., 2006). It encompasses everything that transforms a nation-state's educational programme into general educational aims and objectives, and everything that is translated into official prescriptions of different levels that define the fundamentals of education (laws and regulations, official instructions, education and training syllabi and programmes, and various educational materials). Such a programme tends to be vast in scale and its implementation involves many stakeholders who must, in principle, work in close cooperation. The prescriptions stipulating how the educational goals and objectives are to be transformed into acts remain a dead letter, if they are not integrated into practices in the places where the training, teaching and learning take place. Indeed, teaching practices arguably play a critical role. All of these transformations and applications of official prescriptions define a *curriculum* in the broad sense.

The different levels and the multiplicity of stakeholders involved suggests that achieving cohesiveness in this vast programme remains a constant aspiration, albeit one that is forever unfulfilled. It is therefore crucial to build consensus among these stakeholders, otherwise the chances of reaching the stated goals and objectives remain uncertain. One of the keys to achieving greater cohesiveness and a quality education, which in principle is the goal intended by decision-makers, is to adapt the curriculum with a view to its alignment. It is these same decision-makers who are responsible for the application and monitoring of the main components of the curriculum.

The process of achieving curricular alignment is inevitably influenced by factors that continually undermine balances that are always provisional and unstable. Different factors contribute to this situation, but it is brought about principally by the education systems themselves. These systems are obliged to constantly reform in order to adapt to scientific and technological changes, as well to new educational, health-related and social needs. However, reform efforts rarely affect all levels of the curriculum immediately and simultaneously, for example those of primary education. When reforms are introduced, it is usually at one level, for example that of syllabi. Even at this one level, it is rather unusual to see a reform that applies to primary school as a whole. Sometimes the changes are introduced only at the level of teacher training, with the intention of improving, more or less in the long term, an aspect of the education system. When new teaching materials become available, they are often first tested out in one grade in a limited number of classes. Subsequently, in the best case scenario, if the new materials are judged to be suitable, their use will be extended to the entire grade, and then they will be proposed in the following grades or teaching cycle(s) as they are developed. These reforms introduce new elements that are not yet adapted to other levels. They undermine the entire system and require adjustments to be made, upstream or downstream. It must be recognized that any change is time-consuming and has unforeseen consequences.

The different levels mentioned above show that curricula can be read *vertically* and *horizontally*. A vertical reading provides an overview of the syllabi used in a given period and over several educational cycles. The consistency of the curriculum over time can therefore be assessed in this way. This perspective is relevant if one wishes to promote education for all and training on the scale of a generation. *The horizontal* reading of the available syllabi and teaching resources, as well as the training programmes, highlights consistencies, or conversely disparities and gaps, between the different levels in the operationalization of an educational programme.

The abundance of studies on the concept of curriculum has not resulted in a definition that researchers agree on, however a number of variable elements stand out. These generally express distinctions in level and highlight the inevitable disparities and gaps between types of curriculum. For example, one finds the terms of formal curriculum, real curriculum or hidden curriculum (Perrenoud, 1984), recommended and implemented curriculum or again, mandatory curriculum, supported curriculum, taught curriculum, tested curriculum and learned curriculum (Glatthorn 1987, cited by Audigier et al., 2006, p. 16). Clearly, curriculum research essentially serves as an instrument to guide education systems. Today, however, the new requirement for curricula to be results-driven is pointing to other possibilities for their management.

In this literature review, the definition selected is that of curriculum in the broad sense, as described above, although only one part of the curriculum is analysed: that of reading instruction[26]. Consequently, the question of alignment is limited to the reading instruction curriculum, taking into account official guidelines and syllabi, teaching resources, teacher training and teaching practices. The focus is on the first three grades, that is, on the initial stages of reading instruction. The analysis will be both horizontal and vertical. It will consider the progression of the reading instruction content over the three grades, and the alignment of the teaching materials. Why introduce the concept of progression?

1. CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT AND PROGRESSION OF THE OBJECTS OF LEARNING

The term curriculum alignment is drawn from the domain of education systems management and indicates a political will to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning. It concerns all educational and training content. By empowering key decision-makers in the field of education and adapting training tools, the hope is to achieve an overall improvement of student outcomes.

From a didactic point of view, the term progression designates any official planning of educational content according to a specific temporal order. Didactic progression is based on a conceptualization of how learners appropriate a more or less complex disciplinary object and on knowledge of the learners' learning abilities, particularly in relation to what they are supposed to have already learned up to that point. The progression may vary in how selective it is and how favourable it is to all students succeeding.

Continuities or shifts in the teaching content are intrinsically part of the didactic progression. In any teaching, it is essential to build on the students' existing knowledge, in the continuity of their life experience and learning. To help them appropriate new content, shifts must be introduced. These shifts place students in less familiar or unfamiliar situations, that require them to mobilize their knowledge and approach tasks in new ways. A subtle balance must be struck between continuity and rupture to ensure that the didactic progression fosters learning. Indeed, the syllabi and teaching resources all claim they are designed to facilitate teaching and learning, and the majority of these tools include revision times and repetition drills while also programming new content and activities. Nonetheless, they are not exempt from more or less well-judged shifts that can be instrumental for the success or failure of teachers and students.

26- It should be pointed out that the literature review was part of a larger project, begun in 2012 and continued until 2015, that sought to better understand the factors conducive to improving reading and mathematics performances. This project was conducted under the supervision of the Partnership for the Improvement of Reading and Mathematics in Primary Education (PALME).

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Some models of progression, that introduce shifts while banking on the abandonment of certain subjects in favour of new ones being added, can generate obstacles to learning. For example, the abandonment of the teaching of the code in favour of teaching reading comprehension after the first two years of schooling. Sometimes the progression occurs by introducing new materials (such as the teaching of spelling, grammar or conjugation) radically altering the relationship to educational content. However, the progression can also be conceived of in terms of a logical continuity. It then takes the form of successive stages of further development, reworking and refining the educational content.

It must be emphasized that the development of a progression is based on setting out what is to be taught and then devising a rational plan. Aiming for rational planning in reading instruction is part of the process of external and internal didactic transposition, taken in its broadest sense (Chevallard, 1985/1991). External didactic transposition is based on a modelling of reading abilities that retains elements considered as relevant from the standpoint of teaching and learning, and as legitimate from the standpoint of linguistics, the body of knowledge that serves as a reference here. Elements are selected and specified so as to become teachable. This process of elementarization is integral to any didactic programme that involves a breakdown and a focus on certain parts, certain elements of a whole that remains a complex construct linked to other essentially disciplinary components of the progression.

This development of the progression is not only constructed externally but also internally, at the level of classroom instruction. According to Nonnon (2010), the progression is influenced by the transformation of schooling conditions, the status of educational content and teacher practices (p. 7). It affects what teachers do in a complex relationship, prone to multiple decisions and adjustments between what is prescribed and what is feasible when faced with material constraints and students' learning difficulties.

It would seem to be essential to study the didactic progression of the educational content highlighted in the various tools, proposed to teachers over the first three grades of primary school, in order to decide upon possible adaptations of the curriculum.

Generally speaking, the curricular perspective offers an alignment model that looks at teaching systems from top down, based on what is officially programmed and prescribed – which should be reflected in what is taught. Can one reasonably expect such an alignment of the content taught in the classroom?

2. ALIGNMENT OF PRACTICES ON THE CURRICULUM OR ADJUSTMENT TO THE SITUATION GUIDED BY TEACHING TOOLS AND PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

As already pointed out, aligning teaching practices with the prescribed curriculum may be an ideal objective to which decision-makers aspire. It is an objective worthy of all their efforts to improve educational systems. While aspired to, it remains utopian. The logic of education is understood in its specificities, as a unique activity in a particular context. Many studies highlight the gaps and differences between what is prescribed and what the teacher does in the classroom. Should the question not be looked at from a different angle? Why do gaps and differences

appear in the content that is taught? The answer lies in the specificity of the teaching activity, which cannot be regarded as a strict application of prescriptions. To describe this activity, three perspectives must be considered. The first is that of the teaching and learning situation; the second that of professional practices and the third that of the teaching content itself and how it is translated into practice.

Perspective 1

In class, teaching consists of making content artificially present and negotiating the mediation of new content over the course of the teaching sequences. How the logic of teaching differs from that of learning is in itself a significant factor, as what is taught cannot be the equivalent of what is learned. There is a disparity between the content to be learned, such as it is perceived by students, and the content to be taught, such as conceived by the teacher. Difficulties or obstacles appear. Adjustments, whether negotiated on the spot or not, may be necessary to take into account the students' reactions and the difficulties they encounter. These adjustments may involve decisions that diverge from official curricular guidelines on teaching practices. However, this ability to adapt to the situation cannot be considered as a deviation from the teaching requirements. Rather, it should be se en as a characteristic of experienced teachers. According to a researcher who was one of the first to analyse practices centred on the teaching and learning of reading, Goigoux (1998 and 2001 among other publications)[27], the quality of the adjustments to the students' abilities is what makes the difference in the quality of the teaching. Such adjustments to the students' actual activity are a sign of the teacher's expertise and ability to interact in the students' zone of proximal development (Vygotsky 1934/1985).

At the level of teacher-student interactions, the curricular requirements are reinterpreted in the singular and difficult exercise of teaching. This interpretation gives rise to a progression, produced by the teacher, who translates the educational content *into acts*. The translation of the curricular requirements into acts necessarily differs from the logical order in which their different levels are officially presented.

Perspective 2

The assumption that the curriculum can be applied, without disparities and gaps, in what teachers do in class, is unrealistic. It presupposes that the requirements are clearly stated and cohesive, subject to initial or continuing training - based on tools that suitably operationalize, frame and monitor them in a way that is consistent with teachers' competencies, and the educational constraints faced in schools and classrooms. Clearly, this assumption does not hold. The officially stated educational content is often partial, heterogeneous and even contradictory. In the requirements, instead of consistency in the concepts used, one finds different concepts circulating in relation to the teaching content in question. The statement of the content to be taught, which often differs over time depending on the teaching orders and cycles is in itself a factor of heterogeneity. This is in turn compounded by other factors. Adopted by political and administrative officials, the developed contents are defined by a plural body (various committees comprising experts, supervisors or even teachers). The analysis of the official requirements informs political, institutional and professional decisions. Hébrard (1988) underlines the fact that the requirements describe what should be taught in an ideal school. They condense a set of inevitably contradictory movements linked

27- Among publications on guidance or didactic interaction, see Dumas Carré and Barais Weil's study on scientific education, (1998).

to the expectations and aspirations of the moment, as well as to imperatives to bring about change that take account of social and economic development and the evolution of knowledge. In addition, they need to be consistent in order to be readable and convince many different stakeholders (authorities, experts, supervisors, teachers, parents, etc.). These texts tend to promote the continuities of the prescribed content rather than insist on any reforms: from the standpoint of the educational institution, the challenge is to avoid faulting the previous teaching methods or disavow everything that came before while incorporating the innovations that justify the changes. To highlight the innovations and new directions, these texts seek to attribute legitimacy to certain practices while often passing over others. This manner of proceeding is a way of correcting deviant or erroneous practices without naming them. The prescribed educational content is characterized by the fact that it has been produced through negotiations and is the final outcome of a compromise capping diverse and often numerous controversies. 'Silences' and what has been left unsaid dominate. Thus, one can assume that approaches or methods that have not already found some grounding in professional practices, even to a limited extent, are not included in these texts. As they are too different from current practices, they could antagonize certain stakeholders. Consequently, these texts provide information about the necessarily contradictory primary orientations that guide practices. From this point of view, it is hardly appropriate to look for a relative consistency in the concepts to be taught in these texts.

Perspective 3

In recent decades, there has been a profound shift in the way teachers are perceived. The concern to provide high-quality professional teacher training has contributed to this. Current trends in the analysis of practices broadly converge to identify which competencies expertise is based on. There is a recognition of a professional culture specific to teaching practitioners comprised of know-how acquired through training, but also through experience and peer socialization. This professional culture is forged through regular contact with other teachers who convey practices influenced by multiple traditions (stemming from religious education, the development of a nation or colonization, and are subject to various international influences). Exchanges between peers are initiated from the initial training, when it exists, and are advocated throughout professional life. These exchanges favour the transmission of know-how about the teaching content and tools. They bring relations between requirements and practices up to date, thereby contributing to a consolidation of practices (Schneuwly and Dolz, 2009, p. 63) that incorporates old practices into new ones, distinctly from the latest requirements. This also means that the old practices tend to come to the fore when the new ones show their limits. Various didactic constraints, related to various institutional requirements, and the presence of different kinds of school-going publics, but also to the fact that new features in teaching have not been operationalized didactically, incite teachers to use all means available to foster learning and to draw on diverse ways of doing things that have proved their effectiveness.

KEY POINTS

These different perspectives clearly show that the hypothesis, that professional practices are aligned with the curricular requirements, simply does not hold. However, the alignment of reading instruction content advocated by each level of the curricular requirements and the progression advocated by these same levels remain key factors. Indeed, it seems essential to view the question from the point of view of these factors in order to understand both the prescribed teaching content and the content implemented by teachers.

1. The term *curricular alignment* is taken from the domain of education systems management. It indicates a political will to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning, and concerns all educational and training content. By empowering key decision-makers in the field of education and by adapting training tools, curricular alignment greatly improves teaching conditions and general student outcomes. The efforts of the various stakeholders, especially decision-makers and those in charge of training, should lead to greater alignment concerning the teaching of various school subjects, and of course languages and reading.

2. The perspective of the *didactic progression* of the teaching content, such as it is highlighted in the various tools made available to teachers over the first three grades in primary school, appears to be essential in judging the continuities and shifts generating obstacles for teaching and learning. This perspective also leaves room for any necessary adaptations. Thinking in terms of progression, through phases of repetition and further development, also contributes to curricular alignment.

3. The practices of teachers are viewed in terms of logic, that is highly dependent on the conditions and constraints of teaching and learning in schools. For and in classroom instruction, the curricular requirements are reinterpreted so as to translate teaching content into acts and to adjust them to the students' abilities.

4. The curricular perspective generally offers a top-down alignment model for education systems, that is to say one that starts from what is officially prescribed and programmed. This perspective ignores the constraints involved when educational content is transposed into professional practices. The progression of educational content and curricular alignment also depend on what is taught in classrooms, in a bottom-up movement.

ANALYSES OF PROGRAMMES AND TEXTBOOKS

CHAPTER **5**

EARLY READING INSTRUCTION IN BURKINA FASO

Development is a total phenomenon that also must be embraced in its totality.
And in this totality, culture and education are vital factors.
(Ki-Zerbo, 2013)

From the 1970s, Burkina Faso[28] embarked on a major reform of its education system in order to address the limits of a content-focused system of teaching resulting from the 1962 reform, largely inherited from the colonial period. The reform process involved overhauling programmes and teaching methods as well as reviewing modes and sources of education funding. It is intrinsically linked to the dual ambition of democratizing knowledge by educating the masses through schooling and literacy, and launching a national illiteracy eradication programme.

In the same period, the practice of teaching in national languages was introduced, from 1972 onwards. This change occurred primarily in non-formal education, in training courses for young farmers (provided by the *Formation des Jeunes Agriculteurs* – FJA) that replaced the Rural Schools, as well as in the 'Upper Volta-UNESCO joint project to provide equal access to education for women and girls'. This marked a radical policy shift insofar as in the decade following independence, national languages were only allowed in oral media, especially radio, for news announcements and storytelling evenings (Nikiéma, 2010, p. 16). From 1984 to 1987, intensive literacy campaigns were organized to promote national languages.

From 1979 to 1984, the use of three national languages as media of instruction was piloted in formal education (Ilboudo, 2009; Nikiéma, 2010;). However, French remained the preferred language, 'perpetuating a gap between the two components' (Sawadogo, 2004, p. 254). It was in this context that the 1989 reform of primary education programmes emphasized the concept of teaching by objectives. This reform marks an important milestone, highlighting Burkina Faso's shift to initiatives pinpointing specific areas in order to achieve universal education. These areas were: (1) early childhood education, with the National Programme for Preschool Education (PNEP) developed and adopted in 1995; (2) the improvement of post-primary education, for which existing programmes were adjusted to adapt them to the context; and (3) the promotion and development of non-formal education.

28- The current name of the country, Burkina Faso, dates from 4 August 1984 during the presidency of Thomas Sankara. A combination of the country's two main languages, it means 'the land of honourable people' – *burkina* translating as 'integrity' or 'honour' in Mooré, and *faso*, a term borrowed from the Dioula language, meaning 'territory', 'land' or 'country'. According to the national constitution, the inhabitants are called Burkinabe (invariable), where the suffix 'be' denotes an inhabitant (man or woman) in Fulfulde. The decision to include this mixture of languages in the country's name and that of its inhabitants reflects the desire to unify a multi-ethnic society (encompassing over 60 ethnicities) (Wikipedia).

Despite the efforts undertaken, the set of measures implemented to broaden the reach of the education system fell short of enrolment expectations[29]. This is why the 2007 Education Orientation Law[30], replacing that of 1996, stipulates that education is a national priority. This new law states that: every citizen has the right to education regardless of gender, social origin, race or religion; compulsory education applies to children between the ages of six and 16; no child should be excluded from the system before the age of 16 provided the system can accommodate him or her; public education is secular, private education is recognized and regulated.

The turn of the millennium was marked by a commitment to restructuring programmes, which were called into question by the national report jointly conducted in June 2004, by the Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy (MEBA) and the Ministry of Secondary and Higher Education and Scientific Research (MESSRS), on the development of education in Burkina Faso. This gave rise to an attempt to reform programmes following a competency-based approach in the Ten-Year Basic Education Development Plan. However, the limitations of the competency-based approach and its unsuitability to the Burkinabe context prompted education officials to renounce implementing it strictly:

> 'In short we cannot teach competencies nor teach through competencies' (MENA, 2014, p. 4).

From 2007 onwards, the reflection therefore focused on the integration of 'emerging themes' and 'local specificities' in the framework of the education system reform. The shortcomings observed[31] in the teaching of French and mathematics reinforced the decision to undertake a comprehensive critical assessment of these programmes (MENA, 2014). Concurrently, there was a shift in thinking to reform programmes in line with a pedagogy by objectives approach, a competency-based approach and a text pedagogy approach (PPO-APC-PDT)[32] as part of the government's plan for the strategic development of basic education (PDSEB, 2013):

> The commission, meeting in Manga from 18 to 22 March 2013, recognizes that teaching by objectives (PPO) was faced with objective limits, including disciplinary silos and the focus on the first level of Bloom's taxonomy, i.e. knowledge in the cognitive domain at the expense of the other domains, namely the psychomotor and the socio-affective. It stressed that, after reflecting on the question, as currently promoted, the competency-based approach is not suitable for Burkina Faso. It therefore recommends rewriting these programmes following an eclectic approach, based on a combination between teaching by objectives (PPO), the competency-based approach (APC) and text pedagogy (PdT) (MENA, 2014, p. 5 draft document).

29- *The Ten-Year Basic Education Development Plan* (PDDEB) 2001-2010 anticipates an enrolment rate of 70 per cent in primary education and a literacy rate of 40 per cent. The data provided for 2012 by the Department of Studies and Planning (DEP) of the Ministry of Education and Literacy (MENA) indicate that out of 1,000 students entering Grade 1, 724 make it to Grade 6, and 661 obtain their certificate of primary education. Of the 1,000 enrolled, 549 reach Grade 6 without r epeating, and among them 338 are successful in obtaining their certificate of primary education. (MENA, 2014, p. 10).

30- Law no. 013/2007/AN adopted on 30 July 2007.

31- According to the PASEC study (2009), between 1996 and 2007, the performances of 2nd and 5th grade students have deteriorated. Indeed, during this period, the 2nd grade students' scores went respectively from 58.2 and 53.2 points out of 100 in French and mathematics to 43.1 and 34 points out of 100. This finding was confirmed by the study on learning outcomes (DEP/MENA, 2010), which notes that student performance is below average in all subjects except French in Grade 2 (51.1/100).

32- Sometimes described as 'an interactive teaching approach based on the integration of knowledge' (APU/CIS).

In these reform movements, linguistic diversity is seen as a factor among others in the 'respect for others, in particular through equal treatment of genders, but also through the respect of linguistic, religious and cultural diversity', which is essential in the development of young Burkinabe citizens (Education Orientation Law of 2007). Article 10 also states that 'the languages of instruction are French and the national languages, both in pedagogical practice and in assessments. Other languages may act as media of instruction and disciplines in institutions in accordance with current legislation' (p. 7). 'This law was accompanied by a decree dated 8 May 2009 that describes bilingual education in national languages and French in the following terms:

> The standard primary education comprises a single cycle
> formed of three sub-cycles of two years each (Article 38).
>
> Bilingual primary education using the national language comprises a single cycle
> formed of specific sub-cycles (Article 39).
>
> The normal duration of schooling in standard primary education is six years.
> In bilingual schools using a national language, this period is five years (Article 40).

However, some commentators take a firmer stance regarding the importance of incorporating national languages in the universal schooling process:

> Today, the problem faced by the vast majority of African countries is no longer about attaining a universal enrolment that is totally out of reach, but about striving with patience and tenacity to develop new education systems that provide basic education for the majority of the population. The use of national languages is a step towards achieving this goal (Sawadogo, p. 252).

In sum, the guidelines set out in the official statements stipulate the need to: emphasise 'interactive social constructivism to have learners construct knowledge in interaction with other stakeholders and the environment', 'take into account the specificities of each region and realities of the child's environment', integrate 'the practical aspect of the lessons (functional content, the link between education and production as per the pedagogy of text approach (PdT)' and open up to 'new socio-political, economic, cultural and scientific requirements (TIC, EMP, EI, national languages, emerging themes)', (MENA, 2014, pp.10-11). Bearing these guidelines in mind, in the following section reading instruction is considered in bilingual schools, where the languages of instruction are French and national languages.

1. OFFICIAL INSTRUCTIONS AND SYLLABI IN THE FIRST THREE YEARS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION – 1989-1990 PROGRAMME

The 1989-1990 programmes, massively printed and still in use, are the result of the above-mentioned reforms. They continue to determine the development of educational and learning content in all schools throughout the country, regardless of where and when this content is taught, and in keeping with the set educational objectives. These programmes also guide the initial and continuing training of teachers and teacher trainers (see section on teacher training below) as well as the design of refresher courses in key disciplines and the evaluation of teachers in professional examinations. From this point of view, one of the great strengths of these programmes is unquestionably their availability to all relevant stakeholders.

Designed according to the principles of teaching by objectives, these programmes aim to provide educational guidelines to users while listing the knowledge to be acquired by learners as well as all the resources available to teachers according to class and division (cycle, sub-cycle). They are in fact organized by disciplines in terms of goals, general objectives, schedules, instructions and methodology. Where reading instruction is concerned, the section on methodology corresponds to the prescribed use of official educational media. The programmes are complemented by a document drawn up in 1990-1991: *Objectifs spécifiques et items, CP-CE-CM* (Specific Objectives and Items, Grades 1 to 6) grouping the objectives and items and made available to the educational districts. These programmes therefore determine, for all users, the activities to be implemented, that is to say the approach to be taken in order to achieve the stated objectives. They are designed on the basis of 24 weeks of schooling annually and break down the learning by week and by the number of sessions per day allocated to each discipline in accordance with the relevant grade. Where reading is concerned, the programmes are closely based on the textbooks *Lire au Burkina* (Reading in Burkina) (Grade 1), *Livre de lecture, 2ème année* (Reading Book, Year 2) (Grade 2) and *Livre de lecture, 3ème année* (Reading Book, Year 3) (Grade 3) for the first three levels of schooling.

These objectives and activities have also given rise to a progression[33] in the components that are covered during the first three levels of schooling, Grade 1, Grade 2 and Grade 3. Assessment is based directly on the pedagogical objectives, insofar as it seeks to verify that specific objectives have been reached.

The 1989-1990 programmes draw on the concept of teaching by objectives, which of course represents a break with the earlier programmes. They also respond to a willingness to adapt to the socio-economic and cultural realities of Burkina Faso at the time. They adhere to active methods by recommending in their principles the use of techniques such as observation, surveys, environmental studies and role playing, etc. This point must nonetheless be more closely examined, where initial reading instruction is concerned.

The critical analysis of these programmes, that occurred as part of the general assessment of the implementation of basic education programmes, published by the Ministry of Education and Literacy (2014) highlighted various weaknesses: the lack of a system to monitor the implementation of the programmes; the slowness in the process of rereading the programmes and correcting the textbooks; the fact that the organization of the primary school cycle into sub-cycles (Grade 1-2, Grade 3-4, Grade 5-6) is poorly adapted to realities in the field when it comes to evaluating learning. These criticisms are reformulated here:

- Extremely wide-ranging content, organized into a multitude of disciplines: teachers cannot keep up with the set programme because in their view, too few hours have been assigned to implement it.
- Contents insufficiently adapted to the country's socio-cultural realities: 'our institution is still characterized by its failure to adapt to the realities and the current needs of Burkinabe society' (Emma Kinda). This failure to adapt is related to poor scores in internal efficiency measures (2010 survey on learning outcomes conducted by the Department of Studies and Planning (DEP) of the MENA): 'In reading, 30.6 per cent of Grade 2 students can read fluently, in Grade 5, approximately 67 per cent of students satisfied the requirements of the expressive reading text' (MENA, 2014, p. 10).

33- This point is confirmed by a field survey conducted during the annual educational conference in February 2013 that revealed that more than three quarters of the 107 teaching supervisors interviewed believe that the 1989-1990 programmes provide the child with a comprehensive education as they take into account all areas of learning.

- Failure to consider or inadequate consideration of local learning content: 'How can we envision a curriculum whose content corresponds to the essential educational needs of our country and at the same time creates possibilities for taking local circumstances into account?' (MENA, 2014, p. 11).
- Teaching methods that focus on theoretical knowledge; practice with active methods is absent due to the profusion of objectives, the lack or insufficiency of educational resources, the insufficiency of initial and continuing training, the difficulty for teachers to practise these methods: 'In light of the realities observed in the field, we must wonder whether the current teaching methods are also partly responsible for the delay observed in the implementation of the programmes' (MENA, 2014, p. 11).
- Lack or insufficiency of material to guide teachers in their classroom practices (especially for practical activities to work on production, writing, etc.).
- Disciplinary silos (isolation) and fragmentation of content resulting in a loss of meaning in learning.
- In class practices, 'teachers emphasize cognitive learning to the detriment of the socio-affective and psychomotor domains' (MENA, 2014, 2014, p. 11).
- Moreover, 'evaluation is limited to low taxonomic levels' (MENA, 2014, p. 11).

As there have been requests by education stakeholders to revise the 1989-1990 programmes, the analysis will focus on possible amendments concerning reading instruction in the first three grades of primary school in order to bring it in line with the critical analysis currently being conducted by education stakeholders in Burkina Faso.

Reading in the 1989-1990 primary education programmes: Grades 1-3

Organized by discipline, the programmes define teaching and learning objectives by school grade and teaching time, which for reading comes to: fourteen thirty-minute sessions per week in Grade 1, 12 in Grade 3, and 10 in Grade 4.

The programmes seek to cover all the disciplines of the subjects taught at the various school grades. The following disciplines feature during the first two years: language, reading, writing, calculation, sensory exercises, recitation, songs, moral and civic education. In this disciplinary configuration, *reading* is therefore not the only discipline to work on language objectives, which are also targeted by *language* and *writing*.

This section begins by examining the links between these different components of language of instruction.

In Grade 1 and Grade 2

The goal of *language* is: (1) to help students to express themselves naturally in situations adapted to their environment and age; (2) to promote the acquisition of the basic mechanics of language; (3) to train students' ears and phonatory organs. The work on language is placed within a communication framework, as evidenced by the terms 'communication situation', 'natural and spontaneous expression', 'selected themes' and 'free expression'. However, the presence of an objective such as 'educating the student's ear and phonatory organs' implies a correction of students' pronunciation. Similarly, the general objectives formulated as themes (e.g. developing the children's awareness of their school and their family, having them describe a house in their environment, etc.) guide the teacher to work on words and vocabulary.

CHAPTER 5

Reading has two goals: (1) to introduce students to reading mechanics; (2) to gradually motivate students to discover the meaning of short texts to be read in French. These goals are broken down into seven objectives, namely:

1. Familiarizing the student with reading mechanics.

2. Enabling students to decode the overall meaning.

3. Enabling students to understand words, sentences and short texts.

4. Enabling students to form syllables from known consonants and vowels.

5. Enabling students to construct simple and intelligent sentences describing actions and objects in everyday life.

6. Stimulating students' enthusiasm for reading.

7. Expanding students' vocabulary while developing their spelling proficiency.

Among the seven reading instruction objectives in Grade 1 and Grade 2, the majority are to do with decoding (familiarizing students with reading mechanics, enabling students to decode the overall meaning, to form syllables from known consonants and vowels, and to enrich their lexical knowledge while having them master spelling), while one concerns enthusiasm for reading. Comprehension is not entirely absent from the goals defined in reading, but seems to gradually shift from words to sentences and then – finally – to short texts. From this point of view, the requirements clearly prioritize deciphering and reading mechanics, as is typical of conventional methods. Comprehension of the texts is not taken into consideration from the start.

Writing aims to teach students to correctly write letters, preparing them to transcribe French. The emphasis is placed on learning the code, as well as the hand movement involved in writing. This is to familiarize students with producing the forms of the various graphic signs in French, and to teach them to reproduce lines, points, curves, accents, arabesques, etc. based on the families of letters to be studied. They also gradually learn to use the correct cursive forms in lower and upper case. The progression begins with writing lower case letters matching the letters/sounds they discover in reading, also in lower case at first. In Grade 2, upper case letters are included in writing to match the texts proposed by the textbook. In Grade 2, to practice writing students copy sentences. The links between reading instruction and writing are emphasized, all the while remaining strictly limited to the code since the aim is 'to link all writing instruction to reading instruction...the close connection between reading and writing should be observed daily (producing words and letters, word segmentation in writing, dictations of letters, syllables, words and short sentences' (p. 18).

In Grade 3 and Grade 4

In Grade 3 and Grade 4, the number of disciplines increases: language (replaced by oral expression in Grade 4), reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, conjugation, spelling, written expression, calculation, observational sciences, history, geography, recitation, songs, moral and civic education. This new disciplinary configuration reinforces the importance of components related to teaching French in an approach where the structure of the language is taught in reference to vocabulary, grammar, conjugation, spelling and written expression.

Oral expression aims to develop the students' ability to express themselves orally in French and to train them to express their ideas orally in a more precise and varied manner. The general objectives specifically pertain to reinforcing syntactic structures, as a preparation for writing, while seeking to favour students' natural expression in all situations adapted to their environment and age. Standard exercises are mentioned, however there are no further

details concerning their implementation. These exercises include: morning questions, the student's story, a story to be completed, commentary of a comic strip, reading report, survey report, class meeting, interviewing people, commentary on films, and the dramatization of texts that students have read or listened to. These activities are designed to practise oral expression: with the help of a medium (comic strip, illustrations), students talk about social events. The same media are used for written expression.

These genres can be included in a pedagogy of text approach. The methodology grounds oral expression in reading, proposing a pronunciation lesson based on an illustration and a text as follows:

Presentation of the text on the board
Motivation
Silent reading
Understanding the general meaning of the text
Text read aloud by the teacher and some students
Teacher-led commentary of the text:
- Analysis of the different parts
- Commentary of main ideas
- Transposition
Summary and Conclusion

The reading topics proposed in the third-year reading manual (*Livre de lecture, 3ème année*) can be used for pronunciation exercises. In this respect, oral expression is closely linked to the reading of texts, proposed in the form of a classic teacher-led commentary exercises.

In Grade 3, reading serves two goals: (1) to improve the mechanics of reading fluency through simple texts adapted to the students' level; (2) to train students to discover the general meaning of the texts used in reading exercises. These goals are broken down into six general objectives:

1. Improving the acquisition of reading mechanics.
2. Progressively developing techniques for the fluent and expressive reading of simple texts.
3. Helping students discover the general meaning of the texts read through relevant questions.
4. Interesting the students in the practice of silent reading.
5. Broadening the students' vocabulary while promoting the acquisition of spelling.
6. Fostering an enthusiasm for reading.

The instructions listed in the Grade 3 reading manual indicate a change in the objectives being pursued, since the emphasis is now placed on reading comprehension. Henceforth, the aim is to ensure that students understand any text they read, which also points to the new importance of the text unit, marking a break with the activities proposed in Grade 1 and Grade 2. New activities appear, such as 'varied reading games'. Individually reading aloud seems emerge as one purpose of the exercises, so that the teacher can correct mistakes when students read aloud, and, similarly, correct the answers the students give orally to comprehension questions.

CHAPTER 5..

In Grade 3, as in Grade 1 and Grade 2, *writing* continues to be seen as a means for students to learn how to correctly form letters with a view to transcribing them into French. At this level, writing instruction is focused on the following general objectives: providing students with a tool of written expression that enables them to focus their ideas; continuing to train students' fine motor skills through appropriate exercises; improving the production of letters in lower and upper case; training students to acquire a fluent, regular, legible and well-spaced writing style. The reference to a communication objective (a tool of written expression) remains strongly outweighed by objectives strictly related to the production of forms.

READING INSTRUCTION: PRESCRIBED APPROACHES

The following analysis of the reading instruction activities prescribed by the programme is organized according to the components identified in the literature review, in particular written culture, the teaching of comprehension and the teaching of the code.

Written culture

The question of the initiation into written culture is not mentioned in the official curricula for the first grades of primary school. The programmes for Grade 1 and Grade 2 make no reference to developing an awareness of written culture that could potentially occur through familiarity with oral and written genres (stories, posters, public or private letters, newspapers). At this level of the curriculum, there is no sign of any encouragement to develop school libraries and, depending on conditions, to making information available to students through a variety of media. However, in Grade 4, in the context of language activities, there is a reference to how the diversity of genres can help build bridges between oral and writing skills, as in the case of the formal genres mentioned at beginning of the report. Some of these genres could be used with younger students while making connections between French and local languages. However, there is no reference in the programmes to possible activities to be practised in connection with these text genres.

At no point do the curricular requirements mention the fact that students should be familiar with the world of writing, for example, by discovering how a book is organized, examining its cover and the page order. Nor do they consider the dimensions of the writing system, either in its general characteristics or in its conventions. Yet these dimensions are part of the code in the broad sense, such as for example, the direction of reading from left to right and from top to bottom, the blanks between words, the permanence of writing, and the linearity of words that transcribe speech.

The teaching of reading comprehension

The activities mentioned in the 1989 programmes for Grade 1 and Grade 2 hark back to the general objective of helping students understand words, sentences and short texts. This objective can be linked to the initial and final sessions of the methodology proposed for the teaching and learning of vowels and simple consonants. The starting point of the first session is the presentation, comprehension and memorization of the key sentence. Thus, in the first session of the first day, the teacher is required to comply with the following recommendations:

First session (day 1): Presentation – comprehension – memorization of the key sentence

a) In advance, copy the illustration corresponding to the key sentence on the board.

b) Have the students examine this illustration by asking simple questions (such as: What is it? Who is it?); have the students find a short sentence or expression to match this illustration.

c) Encourage students to share their suggestions then summarize these by giving the exact key sentence.

d) Repeat that key sentence several times; have several students repeat it. (*Programmes d'enseignement des* écoles élémentaires, p. 6).

This initial lesson essentially focuses on word comprehension and the memorization of the key sentence. As such, the image (illustration) does little to promote a text-based or communicative approach. From this point of view, in Grade 1 and Grade 2, students do not, in principle, deal with the functional dimension of reading on the basis of this work on the key sentence (unless the teacher significantly adapts the exercise).

In Grade 1, the last activity proposed in a series of exercises on simple consonants is to read the text from the textbook, specifically, 'the two pages comprising the lesson'. This student is required to read aloud and fluently, i.e. respecting liaisons and the elision of silent letters:

Third session (day 2)

a) Reading from the board: text copied out in advance from the textbook. Read everything out and have the students read the text out sentence by sentence or paragraph by paragraph.

b) Reading, in the book, of the two pages of the lesson: insist on reading fluency, liaisons and the elision of silent letters.

c) At the end of the session, begin writing exercise in copybooks (cursive writing) (*Programmes d'enseignement des* écoles élémentaires, p. 7).

This model is based on sounding out writing orally and not on achieving comprehension through an inferential and index-based process. In this regard, the reference to the 'two pages of the lesson' can lead to misunderstandings insofar as these pages contain segmentation and blending exercises. A question arises at this point: how does the reading aloud of the elements proposed in the textbook help the students' comprehension? The work of reading/comprehension would benefit from targeting the words and then, very quickly, the sentences and series of sentences in the textbook that sometimes constitute short texts suitable for reapplying the activities they have worked on. Exercises to practise reading meaningful words, sentences and series of sentences should therefore be highlighted in the pages of the textbook.

In Grade 2, the programme proposes an approach to reading in which students, following the textbook and in accordance with their abilities, cut up the text to be read. The starting point is the text corresponding to the lesson being done, continuing the earlier work on decoding. Reading fluency comes later when students work on texts presented for themselves, from the 18th week. The meaningful unit then becomes the text, which is read by the teacher.

The teacher works on comprehension by explaining difficult words. Difficulties are dealt with from a lexical point of view, but this does not involve questions of comprehension as such. The text lends itself to various reading exercises (finding words in the text, spelling words, finding words with such and such a sound, etc.). From the standpoint of their content, these texts seem adapted to students' abilities. Nonetheless, when considered in relation to learning the code, they are complex in terms of the phoneme-grapheme correspondences, which can make them difficult for students to decipher and understand.

DAY 2

Reading in the book: cutting up the text to be read in accordance with students' abilities.

First Session

1. Motivation.
2. Teacher reads to class.
3. Explanation of difficult words.
4. First individual reading: have some students read.
5. Deciphering words pointed out on the board.
6. Second individual reading: have the maximum number of student's read.
7. Teacher reads to class.

Second session

1. Teacher reads to class.
2. Individual reading (break the monotony through reading games), examples:
   • Find words in the text.
   • Spell words.
   • Find words with such and such a sound, etc.
3. Model reading by the teacher or a student.

Third session

1. Teacher reads to class.
2. Individual reading.
3. Reading exercises, examples:
   • Dictation of sounds.
   • Dictation of syllables.
   • Dictation of words.
   • Dictation of short sentences.
4. Model reading by the teacher or a good student.

In Grade 3, reading comprehension becomes the central focus through the objective of training the students to discover the general meaning of texts. This concern is reflected in the general teaching objectives: progressively developing techniques enabling students to read simple texts fluently and expressively; helping students discover

the general meaning of the texts being read by guiding them with relevant questions; interesting students in the practice of silent reading; fostering an enthusiasm for reading.

Three conceptions of reading instruction can be observed here: (1) fluent and expressive reading as a reflection of comprehension, e.g. comprehension is achieved by reading the text out loud according to the teacher's model reading; (2) the reinforcement of textual comprehension by answering relevant questions asked by the teacher; and (3) the practice of silent reading.

   1. Motivation.
   2. Silent reading.
   3. Checking general comprehension of the text with a few well-chosen questions.
   4. Explanation of difficult words and expressions.
   5. Having the text read aloud by some good and average students.
   6. Deciphering words that are difficult to pronounce: writing them on the board and having several highly competent students read them out.
   7. Teacher reads to class.
   8. Individual reading aloud by the greatest possible number of students.
   9. Final reading by the teacher or highly competent students (Programmes d'enseignement des écoles élémentaires, 1993, p. 70).

Teaching the code

As demonstrated above, the teaching of the code is the essence of reading instruction in Grade 1 and Grade 2, thus reflecting the organization of the textbooks *Lire au Burkina*, and *Livre de lecture, 2ème année*. The unit around which the programme is organized is the letter. Initially, this involves learning 'simple' vowels (i, u, o, a, e, é, è, ê) and then 'simple' consonants (l, t, p, m, d, r, s, n, b, f, c, v, k, h, j, w, x, y, z) up to the 16th week, before addressing diphthongs (or digraphs; ou, eu, oi, on) and digraphs with equivalent sounds (an, en, in, ain, ei= ai, o= au, eau, é = er, ez, è= et, es, est) and speech sounds (gr, br, cl, pl).

The recommended method is an analytic-synthetic mixed method. The prescribed teaching approach is systematic and mandatory, based on a succession of segmentation exercises (words into syllables, then into letters) and blending exercises (syllables or words) to be completed orally and in writing. The teaching is generally divided into four phases:

   • Global phase: students acquire the key sentence with the help of an illustration.
   • Analysis phase: students isolate the key word in the sentence, break it down into syllables to extract the sound or letter to be studied.
   • Synthesis phase: with the help of the teacher, the students form syllables from the letter or sound studied and new words with these syllables; the students read the combinations on the board.
   • Reapplication phase: a simple and meaningful text is formed with the new words.

These phases must be strictly followed, particularly the segmentation and blending exercises. The methodology differs slightly regarding the instructions for the study of vowels and consonants, which is why this component is dealt with separately.

CHAPTER 5

Here are the prescribed activities[34] concerning the code for the teaching of simple vowels at the beginning of Grade 1:

DAY 1

(The first activity was analysed in terms of comprehension)

Second session: Presentation of the vowel of the day (analysis or segmentation)

a) Recall the key sentence; have some students repeat it.
b) Write the key sentence in print under the illustration (put the vowel of the day in colour).
c) Isolate the key word; pronounce it while stressing the syllable containing the vowel of the day (ali; vê-tu).
d) Segment the key word to the vowel (use coloured chalk).
e) Sound out the isolated vowel and have students sound it out.
f) Optionally, write out the vowel in large letters (in print and cursive) on a card or on a slate; present it to the students; have several students sound it out.

Third session: Reading on the board.

a) Transcribe point no. 2 of the 'reading vowels' lesson on the board; read it out and have several students read it out.
b) On the board, write up words containing the studied vowel (words from the book or words provided by the students or the teacher); have students repeat the vowel, read it out and have several students read it out (don't use coloured chalk, students are required to make an effort to identify the vowel).

DAY 2

First session: Identifying and reading the vowel in other words provided by the students or the teacher.

Second session: Same exercise; it is only by multiplying examples that students consolidate their knowledge.

Third session: Read the reading table in the book (point no. 2 of the lesson page). At the end of the session, students write in their copybooks.

In this first stage of work on the code, the concepts are those of: key sentence, key word (to be pronounced by stressing the syllable), syllable, vowel, print-cursive. From this perspective, the teaching units are primarily written and visual. This can be considered as a predominantly graphophonological approach that essentially grounds the work on the code in writing. It starts from a key sentence to be segmented into words, syllables and letters (vowel or consonant), and then recomposed from letters to syllables according to the blending activities proposed in the methodology for simple consonants, still in Grade 1:

34- To be effective, these phases must be strictly followed; in particular, the segmentation exercises (words into syllables, then into letters) and blending exercises (on syllables or words) to be done orally and in writing should not be left out. By familiarizing students with word structures, these exercises facilitate learning and the acquisition of spelling.

DAY 1

(The first session was analysed in terms of comprehension)

Second session: Presentation of the consonant of the day (analysis)

a) Copy out the key sentence and isolate the words containing the consonant of the day.
b) Read out and have several students repeat these words while stressing the studied consonant.
c) Continue the segmentation until reaching the studied consonant then write it out in print and cursive. Coloured chalk will be used throughout this phase to highlight the consonant of the day.
d) Read out and have several students read out the isolated consonant (keep it in a corner of the board for the next sessions).

Third session: Identification of the consonant

a) Write up words containing the consonant on the board (words from the textbook or proposed by the teacher).
b) Find the studied consonant, sound it out and have several students sound it out (avoid the use of coloured chalk). At the end of the session, have students write it out on their slates.

DAY 2

First session: Syllable formation (synthesis)

a) At the beginning of this session, revise what has been learned, have students find the key sentence and segment it again as far as the consonant.
b) Then, on the board, associate the consonant with vowels that have already been seen, to form syllables. Use the slates.
c) Read the formed syllables.

Second session: Tracking sounds and reading words

a) The teacher illustrates the exercise by providing a word containing the studied consonant; the students are then asked to do provide examples. The teacher writes up examples on the board containing sounds already seen.
b) The teacher reads and has the students read these words, stressing the consonant of the day.

(The third session was analysed in terms of comprehension)
At the end of the session, students write in their copybooks (cursive writing).

The majority of sessions focus on sounding out writing orally, in particular sessions 2 and 3 of the first day; they focus on presentation of the consonant (analysis) and identification of the consonant in words. Session 2 of the second day is devoted to syllable formation (synthesis) and the final session on writing (copying) in the copybooks. The only activity based on oral work is tracking sounds, which involves finding words 'containing the studied consonant'. This is one way among others – not entirely free of ambiguity in how it is formulated

– of working on the phoneme. The teacher provides the example and is then followed by the students, who repeat the exercise before quickly moving on to writing. This approach is proposed for all aspects of the code that are addressed.

As per the programmes' recommendations, the work on the code therefore presents the following characteristics:

- A limited number of activities, essentially segmentation and blending activities, to work on the writing sequence, as well as tracking sounds, which is the only exercise specifically devoted to stimulating, supporting and developing phonological awareness.
- A repetitive approach to sounding out writing from the key sentence (4 out of 6 sessions) involving the memorization of this sentence without any purpose of communication or of completing the reading activity.
- A lack of distinction between the notions of letter (a graphic sign which is not inherently linked to a sound), grapheme (a letter or group of letters corresponding to a phoneme) and phoneme (the smallest non-meaningful oral unit, a sound of language). Thus the instruction given in the context of an activity involving searching for 'words containing the studied consonant' involves going from the letter c to the phoneme (k) produced by the letter 'c' while keeping in mind that this is not a relationship of direct equivalence:
    - 'Musicien' includes the studied consonant but not the expected sound/phoneme;
    - 'Hakani' includes the targeted sound/phoneme referred but not the studied consonant.

The simplification of the system – one letter, one sound – therefore simply ignores an obstacle that teachers may face in practice.

In continuing to teach the code in Grade 2, the approach advocated is not unlike that of Grade 1. It is still based on two days and six sessions:

DAY 1

First session

1) Motivation.

2) Presentation of the key sentence by observing the illustration: guide the students with simple questions.

3) Repetition of the key sentence several times:
- By the teacher.
- By the students.

4) Writing of the key sentence in print on the board by the teacher.

5) Isolation of the word containing the sound to be studied.

6) Segmentation of the word into:
- Syllables.
- Sounds: isolate the sound to be studied by highlighting it in colour.

7) Write out the isolated sound in cursive.

8) Reading of the sound by the teacher and by several students:
- On the board.
- On a card.

9) Students write out the sound on their slates, in print and cursive.

Second session

1) Reminder of the key sentence, the key word and the sound of the day.

2) Finding words containing the studied sound.

- Teacher provides an example.

- Students provide examples.

3) Writing up on the board of words found whose sounds are known to the students.

4) Reading out the words on the board:

- By the teacher.

- By students.

5) Students identify the studied sound in the words written on the board.

6) Reading of identified sound.

- By the teacher.

- By the students.

7) Students write out the sound on their slates in cursive.

Third session: syllable formation

1) Reminder of the key sentence, the key word and the sound of the day.

2) Formation and reading of syllables: associating the sound of the day with vowels or consonants as appropriate and having the maximum number of students read them.

3) Reading exercises (games), examples:

- Dictation of syllables and words.

- Reading of these syllables and words, etc.

DAY 2

Reading in the book: cutting up the text to be read in accordance with students' abilities.

First Session

1) Motivation.

2) Teacher reads to class.

3) Explanation of difficult words.

4) First individual reading: have some students read.

5) Deciphering words pointed out on the board.

6) Second individual reading: have the maximum number of student's read.

7) Teacher reads to class.

Second session

1) Teacher reads to class.

2) Individual reading (break the monotony through reading games), examples:

- Find words in the text.

- Spelling of words.

- Find words with such and such a sound, etc.

3) Model reading by the teacher or a student.

Third session

1) Teacher reads to class.

2) Individual reading.

3) Reading exercises, examples:

- Dictation of sounds.

- Dictation of syllables.

- Dictation of words.

- Dictation of short sentences.

4) Model reading by the teacher or a highly competent student.

The reading of texts in Grade 2 continues to follow the approach adopted in Grade 1 however a greater degree of complexity is introduced with regard to the basic units used in teaching the code. Students' progress beyond letter-sound correspondences to digraphs or trigraphs, extending the lessons at the end of Grade 1 (ch, gn, qu, gu). They also study equivalences (é=ez=er (revision), è=et=es=est (revision), c=s; s=z), inverted syllables (gr, vr, br (revision), bl - cl - pl (revision)) and related sounds.

These complex units of the code are found in the texts the students are asked to read. One may reasonably consider that these texts pose deciphering problems that are difficult to overcome, especially for students who have still not yet mastered the simpler units at the end of Grade 1. From this point of view, one can observe a better articulation in Grade 2 between work on the code and work on comprehension, however, this articulation tends to make texts resistant to deciphering due to the graphomorphological characteristics they concentrate.

In Grade 3, the teaching of the code is required to improve the student's acquisition of the mechanics of reading. For the study of sounds, the programme states that teachers should refer to the pedagogical instructions contained in the Grade 2 reading manual.

Bilingual education programmes

The Grade 1 bilingual education programmes adhere to the teaching by objectives approach. Unlike the classic education programmes, which are organized by discipline and set learning objectives based on the performances students have to achieve in each of these disciplines, the learning objectives in these bilingual programmes are broken down into seven major themes or areas:

1) Instrumental knowledge.

2) The environment.

3) Social education and gender.

4) Health-hygiene-nutrition.

5) Civic-mindedness, human rights and national values.

6) Daily activities.

7) Physical education.

Reading belongs to the domain of instrumental knowledge, which also encompasses the basic skills that are indispensable for students (speaking, reading, writing and calculation). This is the domain that provides students with the tools they need to address all other learning. Its content corresponds to the so-called fundamental or instrumental disciplines (French and mathematics), which were the core components of the old programmes.

DOMAIN: Instrumental knowledge
DISCIPLINE: 1st-year reading
GENERAL OBJECTIVE: Know how to read
GENERAL CONTENT: Reading

N°	SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	SPECIFIC CONTENT	PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES	LEARNING ACTIVITIES	EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS	EVALUATION TASKS
1	Read the letters of the alphabet	The letters of the alphabet: vowels and consonants	Presentation Observation Analysis	Observation Reading Reading games	Key Sentence Key Word Sound of the day Board, Slate	Read the studied letters written in the corner of the board
2	Read the studied sounds	Long vowels Nasalized vowels Compound vowels Syllables	Presentation Observation Analysis Synthesis	Same as above	Same as above	Read the studied sounds and vowels in the corner of the board
3	Identify a studied letter or sound	A letter or a sound	Presentation Observation	Observation Identification Identify the sounds	Words on the board Student textbook	Point to a letter and have a student read it
4	Form words from the studied sounds	Formation of words from the studied sounds	Explanation instructions	- Observation - Production	Slate Letter Sound	Construct three words with the studied sounds
5	Read the words formed from the studied letters	The words formed from the studied letters	Presentation of syllables Word construction Reading	Observation Word construction Reading	Board Syllables	Read the words written on the board
6	Read short sentences containing the studied words	Reading of short sentences	Presentation of words Sentence construction	- Reading words - Sentence construction - Reading of sentences	Board Words	Read a short sentence
7	Read short texts out loud	Reading out loud	Teacher reads to class	- Students read the text out loud.	- Reading texts: . on the board . in the textbook	Read a passage from the text out loud
8	Read a text silently	Silent reading of a text	Presentation of the text	Silent reading.	Reading texts: . on the board . in textbook	Read this text silently and answer the questions
9	Students answer questions about a text they've read.	Question on the content of the text.	Questions on the text	Students' answers Role plays Sketches	- Reading texts: . on the board . in the textbook	Answer the following questions after reading the text. NB: Elaborate two questions

CHAPTER 5

The second year is devoted to the continuation of the first year programme. The national language is used as a medium of instruction. The teaching of the sounds and reading of French is introduced. The document used, *Phonétique et lecture du français* (Phonetics and Reading of French), exposes the students to all the sounds of French and the different forms of the letters of the alphabet: upper case, lower case, cursive writing, printed letters, etc. The goal is for the students to acquire the ability to recognize, distinguish and reproduce the various symbols of the alphabet in French.

Having the students acquire all the sounds of French should result in a correct and discriminatory perception of every sound, a proficiency in producing every sound, as well as the acquisition of the main rules of his symbol-sound correspondence and reading fluency in French. In sum, the students should be able to reproduce sounds properly, in all relevant contexts, and read unfamiliar words encountered for the first time. Following this training, the whole class must at least meet the level of proficiency in producing sounds and reading words and/or texts required of Grade 3 students in normal schooling. The best students are expected to have reached a higher level, which it should be possible to evaluate on the basis of their ability to read the documents of the Pedagogical Institute of Burkina (Institut Pédagogique du Burkina, IPB) designed for these levels of study in the normal school system. Concurrently, the phonetics document aims to teach students a minimal vocabulary (primarily that of fundamental French) and common phrases, to embed the form of the words to be learned in the students' minds, and to develop a number of simple French structures systematically but implicitly.

DOMAIN: Instrumental knowledge
DISCIPLINE: 3rd-year oral expression
GENERAL OBJECTIVE: Know how to express oneself orally
GENERAL CONTENT: Oral expression

N°	SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	SPECIFIC CONTENT	PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES	LEARNING ACTIVITIES	EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS	EVALUATION TASKS
1	Construct sentences orally using a French structure.	Use of structures in sentences	Role-play situation Examples provided by teacher	Observation Reading Construction exercises Correction	Text Sentences	Construct three sentences orally with the structure
2	Answer questions after a reading, an event	Answer questions	Role-play situation Reading Question Summary	Observation Reading/ listening Discussion Correction	Text Questions Event	You attended a child's baptism. What happened?
3	Ask questions about a given subject	Questions about a subject or an event	Role-play situation Reading Instructions	Observation Reading/ listening Questioning Summary	Text Questions Event	After reading about or attending an event with your classmates ask three questions
4	Tell a two- or three-minute story orally	A story	Role-play situation Instructions	Observation/Listening Sentence construction	Facts Story Event	Tell a little story
5	Recite a text	A recitation	Role-play situation Reading Explanation	observation/listening reading repetition memorization	Poem Prose texts to recite	Recite this poem or this prose expressively.

DOMAIN: Instrumental knowledge
DISCIPLINE: 3rd-year Reading
GENERAL OBJECTIVE: Know how to read fluently
GENERAL CONTENT: Fluent reading

N°	SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	SPECIFIC CONTENT	PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES	LEARNING ACTIVITIES	EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS	EVALUATION TASKS
1	Read a text of a few lines fluently	Fluent reading	Role-play situation Silent reading Comprehension question Teacher reads to class Training	Silent reading Answers to questions Individual reading out loud Reading games	Reading book Texts Comic books	Read 2 paragraphs of the text
2	Answer comprehension questions about the text read	Answers to questions	Role-play situation Silent reading Observation Questioning Corrections	Silent reading Answers to questions	Text Comic books	After reading the text answer the comprehension questions N.B: The teacher writes the questions
3	Ask questions orally or in writing about a text read	Questions relating to a text read	Observation/ Listening Discussion Examples Correction	Questioning Answers Correction	Text Reading book	You have read the text; ask a classmate a question about the text.

FINDINGS OF THE ANALYSES OF THE PROGRAMMES

1- The examination of the aims and objectives of language teaching in Grades 1-3 points to two specific disciplinary configurations. An initial configuration in Grade 1 and Grade 2 that is dominated by the teaching of the code by working with non-meaningful units: letters (consonants and vowels), syllables, words, sentences and possibly short texts. In this configuration, the focus is primarily on reading and writing activities. There is clearly a fundamental reference to a communicative approach through the links to the study of *language*. Nevertheless, it remains that beyond this reference to communication situations and the grounding of the work in language activities, the overall balance in the disciplinary configuration is fragile. At all times there is a likelihood that the balance will shift[35] to teaching the code, which is the focus of the reading and writing activities: work on pronunciation, non-meaningful units (syllables, consonants, vowels), vocabulary and spelling, the production of letter forms, the sentence.

2- A second configuration in Grade 3 (or the end of Grade 2) shifts the focus to the reading of texts, an orientation that is strongly at odds with the two previous years of compulsory education. Apart from oral expression activities, the methodology is centered on approaches in which reading texts from the textbook serves as a starting point for pronunciation activities. While one cannot necessarily speak of a communication-based teaching, it would seem that there is potential here for the teaching of comprehension, alongside the conventional systems that by turns involve silent reading, general comprehension of the text, the explanation of difficult words, the teacher reading to the class, individual reading and reading aloud

35- This imbalance, which is characteristic of communicative approaches, has been highlighted in many studies on the reform of teaching in the last third of the 20th century (in this regard, see Aeby et al., 2000, for a synthesis on teaching in French-speaking Switzerland). It is also evident in the lack of proposals in the educational resources to support and evaluate the communicative dimensions of language teaching.

by students and then by the teacher or good students. However, without pedagogical and didactic guidelines to establish a communication-based teaching from the cited text genres, there is a strong likelihood that the emphasis will be placed on the traditional sub-disciplines of teaching French.

3- The methodology used to teach the code is based on a limited and systematic number of exercises, especially analysis and synthesis exercises. There may be cause to reinforce the work on some components of the code, depending on the stage. For example, with activities to develop phonological awareness in early learning, or reflective activities on the orthographic dimensions involved in reading instruction.

4- Sounding out the text orally through fluent and expressive reading is a common activity, one that even constitutes the final purpose of reading instruction and constitutes its preferred mode of evaluation.

5- The methodology prescribes a limited number of systematic activities to be implemented in the classroom, which leaves teachers limited leeway to adapt their teaching to the needs and abilities of students at different stages of learning; prescribing a methodology based on a series of activities may give rise to a tendency to preferentially implement these activities in the form of mechanical exercises involving memorization, to the detriment of a reflection on the objectives being pursued and the student abilities being developed. The various letters/sounds, as well as revisions, are introduced at quite a fast rhythm considering that students have to acquire these letters both in print and cursive writing. A slower and/or more targeted progression would be advisable.

6- It is not mentioned anywhere, that French is a second language for a majority of students and that this specificity should be taken into account when teaching French and reading.

2. OFFICIAL READING INSTRUCTION MATERIALS

The recommended method of teaching reading is the combined analytic-synthetic method. It is set out in the official textbooks published prior to the 1989-1990 primary school teaching programmes:

1- *Lire au Burkina 1ère année* (Reading in Burkina, Year 1, Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy, Burkina Faso, 1987, MEBA 2010; preface by Philippe Somé).

2- *Livre de lecture, 2ème année* (Reading Book, Year 2, Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy, Burkina Faso, 1987; preface by Sansan Jean-Baptiste).

3- *Livre de lecture, 3ème année* (Reading Book, Year 3, Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy, Burkina Faso, 1987; preface by Alice Tiendrebeogo, 2012).

It is presented in Philip Somé's preface to the 2010 edition of *Lire au Burkina 1ère année* as 'a mixed method that is predominantly syllabic, because its use is well suited to Burkina Faso and it easier to master in terms of progression' (preface by Philippe Somé, pp. 3-4):

> The method used in this textbook is the mixed method that combines the advantages of two methods, namely the whole-word method and the syllabic method. Indeed, on the one hand, the mixed method enables students to perceive a certain number of elements as a whole, and, on the other, to immediately perform both analysis and synthesis (p. 4).

It adheres to a definition of reading that essentially corresponds to speaking writing aloud. The final goal is reading fluency, which is considered to reflect comprehension:

> Yet reading is not a merely about deciphering isolated units (letters, syllables, words), but decoding a message expressed by these units considered as a whole. That is why the teacher will strive to quickly go beyond syllabic reading, to arrive at a fluent, natural reading that proves that students understand what they read (p. 4).

All the proposed methods are in keeping with this orientation, including *Lire et écrire au Burkina Faso* (Reading and Writing in Burkina Faso) by the NGO Bambini nel deserto, which presents itself as '…a mixed method, predominantly phonemic and syllabic, that presents sounds in upper case characters' (preface to *Lire et écrire au Burkina Faso*).

Written culture

While the reading method *Lire au Burkina* is very well adapted to the African schoolchild in its themes, the dimension of written culture is absent. The theme of school does feature, along with its different characters, but there is little reference to the practices of reading and writing, or to any written media (with two exceptions: the story 'Le chat devenu savant' (The wise cat) in the Grade 2 textbook (pp. 72-73).
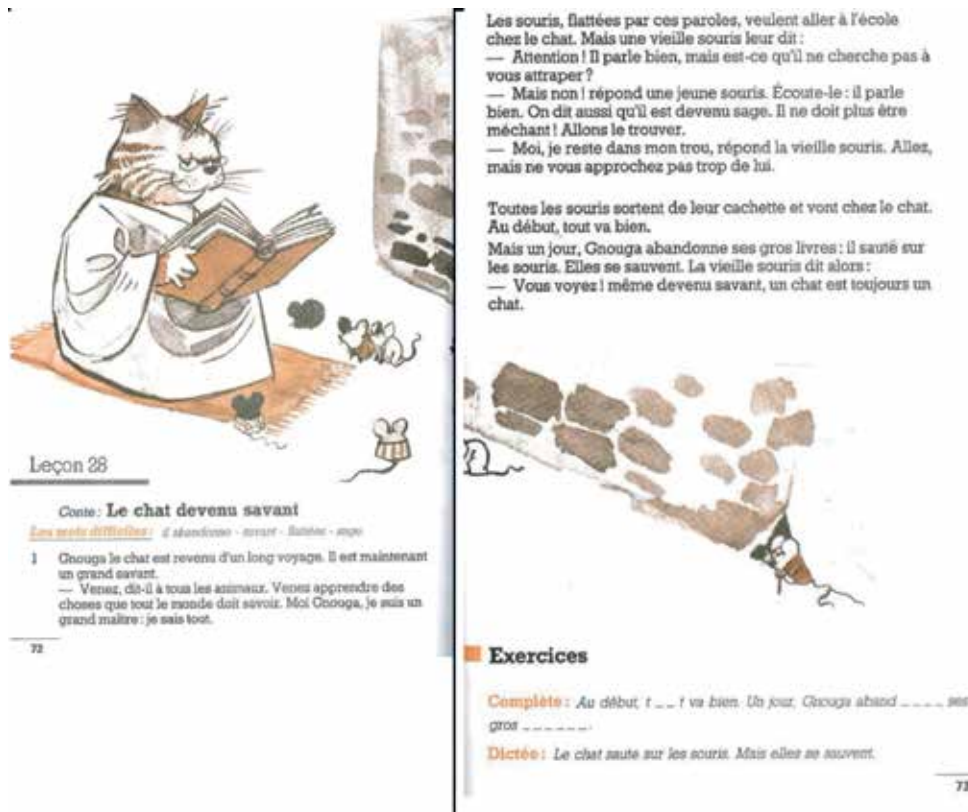
Figure 5.1: Lire et écrire au Burkina: 'Le chat devenu savant'

The sequence of reading comprehension activities

The work units proposed for reading in Grade 1, are found in the parts of the textbook devoted to the study of simple vowels. For example, lesson 1, on the vowel 'i', presents the sentence 'ali est vêtu' and a list of words (pipe, ali, lit, midi, uni, igname, canari). An image is associated with the key sentence.

For the study of consonants, for example 'd' in lesson 13, several sentences are provided ('madi est malade', 'Ada ma est malade', 'papa a du dolo') and associated with images.

Figure 5.2: Lire et écrire au Burkina: 'Madi est malade'

Exercise 3 is devoted to reading words, with a view to working on recognition – 'de', 'une', 'est' – and decoding – 'il', 'adama', 'odile', 'madame', 'dos', 'dolo', 'malade'. There are also sentences:

Figure 5.3: Lire et écrire au Burkina
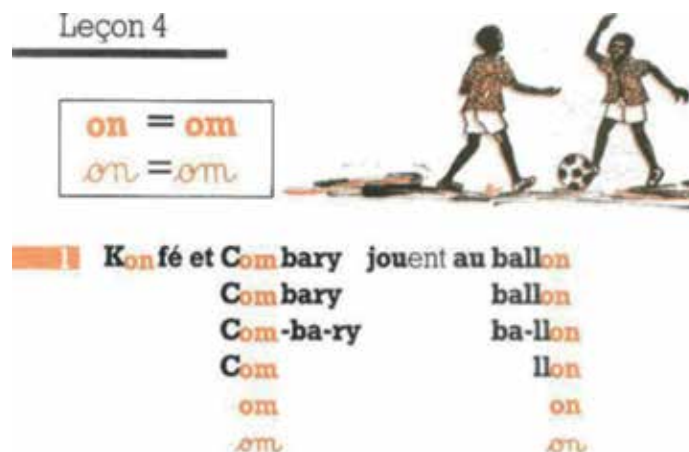
Figure 5.4: Lire et écrire au Burkina

Reading focuses on the words 'Compaoré', 'Combary', 'un nom', 'un prénom', 'une pompe', 'des nombres', 'du gombo', 'son surnom' and 'un front bombé'.

At the end, a short text containing these words is presented:

Mon voisin de classe

1 Dans notre classe, nous sommes nombreux. Le maître connaît le nom et le prénom de chacun. Certains ont des surnoms, mais tout le monde préfère être appelé par son prénom.

2 Mon voisin s'appelle Compaoré Issa. Compaoré est son nom, Issa est son prénom. Il joue bien au ballon : on l'appelle Issa-ballon. Il aime ce surnom.

3 L'autre jour, Issa-ballon est tombé. Il s'est blessé. Ses camarades l'ont consolé.

Figure 5.5: *Lire et écrire au Burkina*

This text seems adapted to students in terms of its themes. However, one must consider that it repeats the decoding difficulties (in this example, the equivalence between the digraphs on and om (*ballon* vs *nom*) for the phoneme (õ), but also the distinction with the phonemes (om) and (on) for the same letters (*connaît* vs. *sommes*). These difficulties are in themselves barriers to reading fluency. From page 70, twenty-eight short texts are proposed, followed by exercises. Then at the end of the textbook, there are recitations.

In the countryside (*Lire au Burkina*, Reading in Burkina Grade 2)

- *Pendant les vacances, je vais chez mes grands-parents. Ils habitent à la campagne. Ils sont encore forts.* (During the holidays, I go to my grandparents' house. They live in the countryside. They are still strong).
- *Grand-père se lève très tôt. Il va au champ avec oncle Sambo et les enfants. Pendant ce temps, grand-mère-allume sa lampe.* (Grandad gets up very early. He goes to the field with Uncle Sambo and the children. In the meantime, grandmother lights her lamp).
- *Elle prépare le repas avec tante Fanta. Après, elles vont retrouver les autres au champ.* (She prepares the meal with Aunt Fanta. She will join the others in the field later).
- *Grand-mère fait de bons beignets. Elle sait aussi soigner les enfants avec les plantes.* (Grandmother makes good fritters. She also knows how to heal children with plants.)

The Grade 3 reading manual proposes exercises based on these texts. The authors have gone through considerable efforts to adapt them to the context of Burkina Faso: the themes are close to students' everyday lives.

They concern school, the children's activities at school and outside of school (especially football), family, jobs etc. Stories also feature in the textbook. In this respect, the Grade 3 textbook proposes many interesting texts (see story presented below) of different kinds (narrative, descriptive, explanatory and rhetorical) drawn from a variety of genres. On this point, the analysis is in line with the observations made in the *Guide de l'enseignante et de l'enseignant pour l'implantation des fiches de lecture* (Teacher's Guide for the Implementation of Reading Sheets) concerning the suitability of the proposed texts (PAMEB, MEBA 2010). Nonetheless, these texts remain underused in relation to the proposed methodology, with regard to their specific genres and the comprehension activities they could give rise to. This is despite the fact that extremely interesting proposals exist (MEBA 2010) for their use in the form of reading sheets, based on questions of text and genre that propose targeted comprehension activities. This material could be developed in the context of the broad dissemination of textual approaches in Grade 3 (see Chapter 8, devoted to the analysis of practices in Burkina Faso and in particular the PAMEB project).
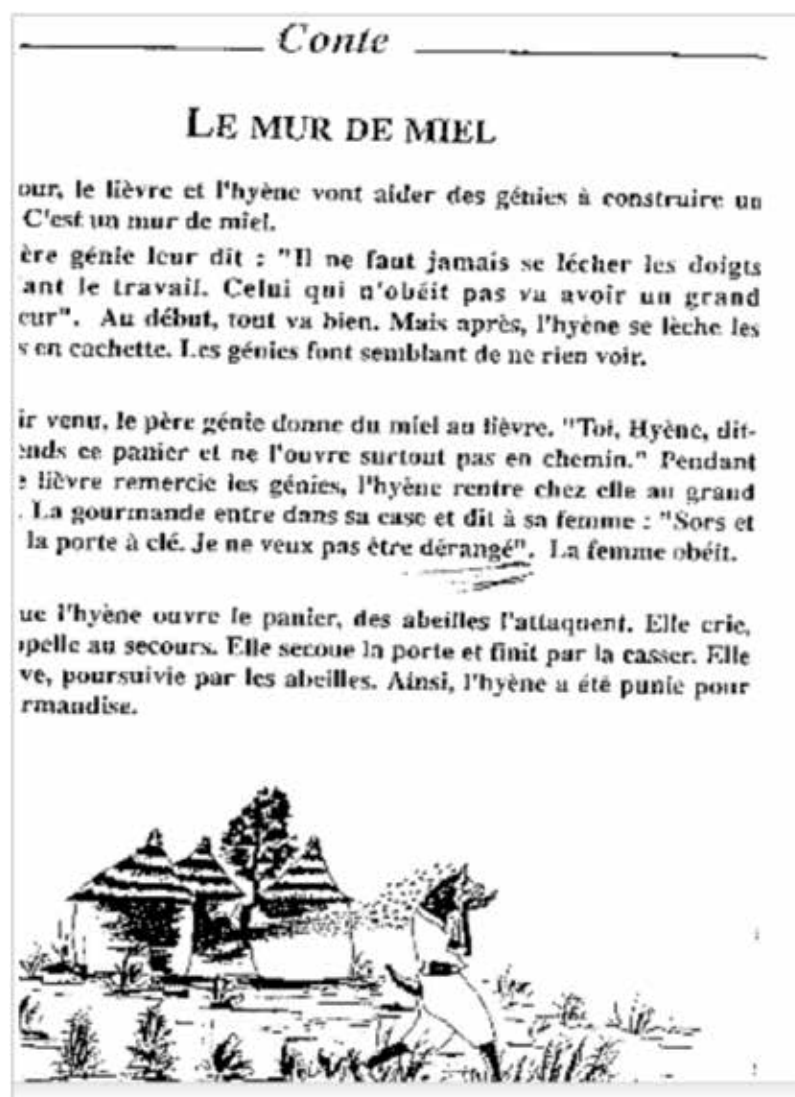
Figure 5.6: Text from Livre de lecture, 3ème année used in classroom Grade 3 practice (see Chapter 8 on analysis of practices in Burkina Faso)
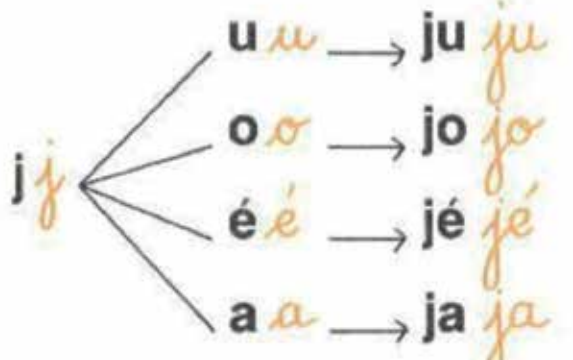
The sequencing of decoding activities

The analysis seeks to highlight the specificities of the various activities designed to work on the different dimensions of reading. As such, the aim here is to show the contributions and possible additions to the segmentation and blending activities proposed by the Grade 1 textbook.

ON VOWELS			POSSIBILITIES AND SUGGESTIONS
la moto de papa o o		Sentence	
1 ① la moto de papa moto mo-to mo to o o o o		Analysis exercise (segmentation)	
2 ② lecture de la voyelle : o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o		Reading of the vowel	Recognition of the letter, name, sound, form
③ repérage de la voyelle : moto – sori – loto – kola – gogo – bobo moto - sori - loto - kola - gogo - bobo		Identification of the vowel in the word	Identification of the vowel in writing (visual discrimination) Identification of the vowel orally (auditory discrimination), position of the phoneme in the words (with the help of symbols)
④ écriture : o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o		Writing a student's first name containing the studied vowel (possibility of permanently displaying it in class)	Writing a student's first name containing the studied vowel (possibility of permanently displaying it in class)

The starting point of the activities is a sentence; the same sentence is used to work on several vowels ('o' and 'a' in this instance). This gives rise to (1) an analysis exercise (segmentation); (2) an exercise on reading the vowel; (3) an exercise on identifying the vowel in several words (except for words already seen in the key sentence, these words are not decipherable at this stage of learning); and (4) an exercise on writing the vowel.

ON CONSONANTS		SENTENCE	POSSIBILITIES AND SUGGESTIONS
julie a une jolie jupe			
① julie a une jolie jupe julie jolie jupe ju-lie jo-lie ju-pe ju jo ju j j j j j j		Analysis exercise (segmentation)	
j → ju ju j → jo jo j → jé jé j → ja ja ju jo ja je jé jo ja je		Blending exercises	
Addition of Programmes		Tracking sounds	Auditory discrimination work on phonological awareness
③ lecture : ■ avec sur avec sur avec sur avec sur avec		Word recognition	Visual recognition-work on the memorization of these words, manipulation exercises using labels

■ julie – jérémie – une jarre – une jupe – déjà *julie. jérémie. une jarre – une jupe. déjà* ■ la jolie jupe de julie	Deciphering words	Visual discrimination: identification of the consonant in writing Auditory discrimination: identification of the consonant orally; position of the phoneme in the words using reading exercises)
1. papa a donné une jolie jupe à julie. la mère de julie dit : "oh ! julie, ta jupe est jolie !" 2. julie a mis sa jolie jupe. elle va à la fête. elle a vu lolo. lolo dit : "oh ! julie, tu es jolie !" 3. julie arrive à la fête. sori a vu julie. il dit : "oh ! oh ! la jupe de julie est jolie."	Reapplication	Reading exercises
④ écriture : *ju ju ju ju ju ju ju ju ju*	Writing	

The starting point of the activities is the sentence, here is a sentence to work on a consonant. It gives rise to (1) an analysis exercise (segmentation); (2) a blending exercise on syllabic blending; (3) reading exercises. The reading exercises focus on recognizing words to be memorized, reading words that students are capable of deciphering – which could lead to complementary activities working on auditory and visual discrimination, and reading sentences and cohesive series of sentences, thus capping reading work by providing access to comprehension. It is essentially these last two parts that offer potential for reading-aloud activities (deciphering words and sentences).

Revision activities are proposed regularly: blending exercises based on combining two letters, or word and sentence reading exercises repeating what was seen in the two previous units.

Where writing activities are concerned, in Grade 1 and Grade 2, the textbooks contain spelling exercises related to what was seen in reading: dictations of syllables, words and short sentences drawn from the readings. Self-dictation exercises are also proposed in this cycle using short texts seen previously in reading. The text is written on the board missing some words and the students must complete the text from memory.

Progression

According to the textbook, the work on the code is organized as follows:

Work on vowels: identification of key words in a sentence, segmentation and memorization of words, visual recognition of vowels; at this level, the students cannot be expected to do phonological blending since they do not know the consonants yet.

This first stage could also be the ideal moment to prioritize phonological awareness, which would entail a lot of oral work on language sounds.

Work on consonants: segmentation of a sentence into words, syllables and letters, and blending to work on syllabic blending (implying visual and auditory discrimination); word memorization, deciphering of words and sentences or series of sentences.

This second stage must also be used to prioritize exercises to work on visual and auditory discrimination.

Work on digraphs, trigraphs, equivalents and inverted syllables: the same principle as above, albeit in a more orthographic approach.

This third step reinforces phonogrammic and grapheme-phoneme correspondences while introducing a stronger emphasis on spelling, especially through work on equivalences and complex sounds.

In the progression taking shape here, one can distinguish a series of stages in which reading instruction is no longer reduced to sounding out writing orally, but involves exercises on different components. However, a number of questions arise:

- The systematic learning of letters takes place successively, but is there a place (poster, board) where students can see all the letters of the alphabet displayed?
- The work is predominantly written, based on the principle of segmentation and blending. What place is attributed to auditory discrimination activities designed to develop phonological awareness, which is essential in early learning?
- Digraphs and some correspondences are included at the end of Grade 1 and in Grade 2 whereas they are crucial to understanding the orthographic system: should they be introduced earlier?
- Special attention is given to compound sounds in Grade 2: is it necessary to insist so strongly on compound sounds? Do they fall under reading instruction or spelling? Is the segmentation-blending method still relevant with these compound sounds? Would it not be possible to address these orthographic specificities directly from the texts?

There is minimal work on comprehension in Grade 1, particularly due to the low number of texts read by the teacher. It is present in Grade 2, particularly through reading the texts on the right page of the textbook. However, these readings are extremely complicated in terms of graphophonological correspondences and simpler ones should be proposed in Grade 2. In the Grade 2 textbook, the study of sounds stops on page 67, and the next section proposes a series of texts to work on reading fluency.

Figure 5.7: Table of contents, Grade 2 textbook

The NGO Bambini nel Deserto has produced interactive reading and writing textbooks for Grade 1 students. The analysis of these textbooks, while not as detailed as that of the official manual, reveals a tendency to simplify. They start with capital letters and work on pre-writing and writing skills before moving on to lower case and cursive.

It is interesting that the textbook announces that it will work from a predominantly phonemic approach: it provides teachers with images that students will be able to name orally, and thus enrich their vocabulary. These images can also be used to work on phonological awareness, for example by identifying the same phoneme in four images: *serpent, sac, soleil, souris*.

The factor of multilingualism

The 1989-1990 programmes (1993 reprint), do not take multilingualism and its specificities into account in language teaching. Nor does the textbook, and no mention is made of the fact that children are learning to read in French, a second language, which has specific consequences for reading instruction. No recommendation is made in relation to this question as bilingual education has its own programme and its own means of instruction. One may nonetheless note an adaptation to the Burkinabe context from the thematic point of view as well as in the various names chosen in the texts. However, the order and rate at which letters (vowels and consonants) are introduced ignores the specific difficulties that this may imply for students speaking another language. For example, lessons 5, 6, 7, 8 and the ensuing revision on the letter e with or without diacritics (e, é, è, ê) are highly likely to cause difficulties for the students.

CHAPTER 5

THE TEXTBOOKS USED IN BILINGUAL EDUCATION

This section presents the textbooks used in bilingual education, essentially textbooks co-produced by MEBA and OSEO/SOLIDAR SUISSE. The textbook concerning the ELAN initiative is described in Chapter 8 for Burkina Faso but also in the chapters on Niger and Senegal, these three countries all participating in the ELAN project. All the methods currently used in Burkina are mixed, with some variants and dominant approaches. The national language textbooks are designed for students to acquire French from the national language, through a transfer process. What fundamentally opposes the designers of these textbooks in conceptual terms is the model of bilingualism they choose: some, such as SOLIDAR SUISSE (OSEO), advocate an additive bilingualism and others, such as Tin Tua and ES/CEBNF, base their approach on subtractive bilingualism. However, all agree on the invaluable contribution of the national languages to the conquest of knowledge, a knowledge that is no longer confused with the French language. For a presentation of teaching resources used in satellite schools as well as in Banma Nuara 1 centres or the Tin Tua approach, the reader is referred to the report by Victor Yameogo (2014).

OSEO textbooks[36]

The MEBA/SOLIDAR SUISSE (OSEO) textbooks adopt a mixed approach, in keeping with the official methodology. To effectively teach the reading lesson in the 1st year of bilingual schools, the teacher must comply with the following principles:

- Always start from the key sentence drawn from the discussion-debates;
- Have the students participate in discovering the sound of the day;
- At all stages, focus on individual reading by the greatest possible number of students;
- Vary the syllabication exercises while emphasizing new combinations of the letter of the day with other letters that have already been taught;
- Do comparisons of the new syllabic combinations;
- Contrast, in the same context, the letter of the day and letters already studied;
- Use letters written on the slate;
- Link reading and writing;
- Encourage the child to be active in all learning activities;
- Accustom students to natural reading;
- Keep to the recommended methods as they contribute greatly to achieving the objectives;
- Do revision exercises on the board based on minimal pairs.

Where the teaching of the code is concerned, there is therefore a very strong similarity to the official methodology. Writing is linked to reading in the OSEO bilingual approach. The aim in writing is to:

- Have learners acquire the fine-motor mechanics of the written code.
- Ensure learners know how to correctly write sounds, words, sentences and short paragraphs when dictated or in their compositions.

36- This section is based on the report by Victor Yameogo, conducted as part of this project.

- Focus on print in the first year to avoid too much variation between the forms of the graphemes to be written and their form in the reading manual.
- Teach cursive letters and capitals from the 2nd year.
- Link the writing programme to the reading one.

Particular emphasis is placed on the teaching of writing, with the following recommendations stipulated:

- Set aside two weeks for the initiation into letter forms using slates and copybooks (1st year).
- Strictly follow the rhythm of one page of writing per day (1st year).
- Only use print (1st year).
- Use ordinary copybooks (1st and 2nd year).
- Practise writing the different letters on the slates before writing them in the copybooks (1st and 2nd year).
- Introduce cursive and print (2nd year).
- Introduce upper case in print and cursive (2nd year).
- Write out the model in the copybooks.

With regard to both the basic signs and the writing of letters, the teaching method used in bilingual schools is the same as in the conventional schools. Two sessions are generally devoted to these aspects, the last of which to writing in the copybooks.

FINDINGS OF THE ANALYSIS OF THE MEANS OF INSTRUCTION

1- The proposed teaching methods are specific to the teaching of reading in French and do not take into account the learners' language and linguistic abilities, particularly the absence of certain phonemes, graphemes and letters in one of the most widespread national languages, Mooré: the work on the vowel e, é, è, ê in the first weeks.

2- The decision to adopt a mixed teaching method induces work on the letter/sound (vowel and consonant), equivalences and linked sounds that is not always efficient in helping teachers and students deal with the complexity of French writing system.

3- The rate of revision proposed in the textbook is high and is likely to favour a form of assessment that focuses on the various components students have been asked to master. Learning to read takes time.

4- From Grade 3, the texts contained in the teaching method certainly have positive qualities, one being the fact that they introduce work on reading comprehension (notably through the use of stories). Some complementary means (*Lire et* écrire *au Burkina*) propose simple texts that may be used in a classroom with Grade 1 students. The series of sentences or short texts associated with work on the code in Grade 2 may be challenging for the students insofar as they contain a high number of graphophonological difficulties. One should therefore also take this factor into account with regard to the code in the choice of the texts the students are asked to read.

3. TEACHER TRAINING

This section was drafted on the basis of available documents and interviews conducted in the field.

INITIAL TRAINING

The training courses run by the national primary education teacher training schools (Écoles Nationales des Enseignants du Primaire, ENEP) are closely linked to the primary school programmes. They are defined by the ENEP General Directors, based on the guidelines defined by the Ministry. An annual meeting is held for the trainers of the country's seven public ENEPs. Various topics are discussed (the latest meeting focused on the modular approach to content and educational continuum). There are no contacts with the private teacher training schools.

At the ENEP in Loumbila, which was visited in the course of this study and where the authors met with some of the stakeholders, the training staff comprise one hundred people, fourteen of whom are full-time and the rest contractors[37]. After several years of teaching, they have completed training as supervisors (inspectors or educational advisers). They are qualified to work in various disciplines, as required. The first-year students are shown films of teachers in teaching situations; they then discuss these films and relate them to the methodology prescribed for the given discipline.

One question that arises is that of the teacher-students' qualifications: to enter the ENEP they are still required to have their junior secondary school diploma (brevet d'études du premier cycle, BEPC). If teachers are to innovate then it supposes that they are capable of doing research, but it is only at the level of the senior secondary school diploma (baccalauréat, BAC) that this is possible (the teachers' behaviour reflects their level of training). According to projections, from 2015, recruitment of student teachers will be done at the BAC level. The candidates will be better able to contribute to the pedagogical and didactic research, in context. For now, upon completing two years of initial training at the ENEP, student teachers must pass the primary teaching certificate (CEAP).

READING TRAINING

The training in reading instruction follows the guidelines of the official documents, in keeping with the methodology prescribed in the programmes and in official textbooks. Indeed, from the interviews conducted in the field, a twofold requirement was mentioned: that teachers should 'like to read and strictly follow the official methodological approach'.

During the two years of training, theory and practice are combined. The first year of training is devoted to teaching French and to upgrading the student teachers' level in French. This course is considered to be important by all the partners. It is given by secondary school French teachers (60 hours).

The aim is to teach student teachers the objectives, content and methods of reading instruction. The training also includes classroom simulation sessions and the second year focuses on teaching practice in so-called écoles d'application (application schools). During this second year, the teaching is done by the supervisors in the field

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37- The contractors are usually primary school supervisors, and sometimes secondary school teachers who trained at the ENS (École Normale Supérieure). The ENS is an educational, vocational training and research institution, part of the University of Koudougou.

(inspectors, educational advisers and school principals). The ENEP trainers go into the field to supervise the 2nd-year student teachers during their work experience; they meet principals, inspectors and teacher trainers (interview with teacher trainer from the Loumbila ENEP). The main work on reading is done in the adjacent school (classroom observation), outside of the work experience (Interview with Etienne Kabore, General Director of the Loumbila ENEP, 22 April 2014).

In the course of the interviews conducted at the ENEP in Loumbila, the limits of the prescribed teaching systems and the recommended methodology were highlighted by principals and trainers as well as by student teachers:

- Lessons are memorized without students understanding the system or decoding what they are reading.
- Evaluation is carried out according to classic criteria focused on the dictation of words on a slate. The evaluation criteria remain empirical and subjective because they are imprecise: fluent reading of a text and comprehension.
- The texts from the DRDP reading books, designed according to themes, are underused. The traditional stories present in these textbooks are poorly used in reading instruction. Students work on comprehension but not on text genres or aesthetic judgment, aspects that some trainers try to develop during the training.
- There is a shortage of material and illustrations, particularly for teaching reading in the early grades.
- Little room is left for personal initiative (which is not officially prescribed) in an educational system that is failing to keep up with research.

What emerges from all the interviews is that the recommended mixed method is not fundamentally called into question. However, it is recognized that not all the innovative methods have been formally validated and therefore do not fall within the scope of the evaluation criteria. There is a desire to experiment with approaches other than the advocated mixed method, for example with the so-called 'eclectic' method. The pedagogy of text, in which some ENEP trainers are trained, is regarded as a good approach in reading instruction[38]. Yet, the need to first master the prescribed method is mentioned. From this point of view, the two years of training are perceived as restricting opportunities to explore other approaches. In this context, the main stakeholders declare themselves in favour or strongly in favour of an innovative reform in the teaching of French and reading (Interview with Etienne Kabore, General Director of the Loumbila ENEP, 22 April 2014).

TRAINING IN BILINGUAL EDUCATION

According to interviews with trainers and student-teachers, bilingual education training is limited to transcription (80 h), i.e. 'learning to write in a national language'. However, several partners are of the opinion that knowing how to write in a national language does not mean that one can explain its rules. A specific didactic approach, with regard to bilingual education seems to be under consideration but is not yet effective in training. Student teachers receive no instruction on how to deal with this issue in class, despite the fact that children generally do not speak French when they start school. Hence the impression, that this is a question that remains to be clarified in the training. Using a language that the child already knows facilitates the teaching of French and scientific disciplines. As one author explains:

38- cf. the training in 'Pedagogy of Text' initiated by DRENA started this training in 2011. Ms Pauline Yabre is in charge of this training.

Training in bilingual education, including in the teaching of African languages, is somewhat marginal, an appendage to the teaching of French and in French, including in countries that have a 'long experience' in bilingual education (Niger, Mali). Moreover, the training almost exclusively concerns teachers who teach the bilingual classes and rarely other teachers. The teaching supervisors (inspectors, educational advisers, principals) are often not affected (Nikiéma, 2010, p. 30).

As for the teachers who are later assigned to a bilingual school, they receive additional training provided by the inspectors. From this point of view, the dominant mode of training is continuing training (Nikièma, 2010, p. 30). However, the trainers feel that teaching in bilingual schools requires an enormous amount of work, both to master the national language and French. The schools operate according to a model of subtractive bilingualism (so that by the end of primary school, at ratio of 10 per cent national language to 90 per cent French is achieved). The programme is regarded as much too heavy for the bilingual school students, especially in the second year. Bilingual education usually stops at the end of primary school, with one exception, the multilingual *collège* in Loumbila.

Some negative points are mentioned with regard to bilingual education:

- Parents are not favourable to bilingual education or do not support it; they can only help their children orally. Those who have followed literacy courses can help their children more.
- Students who have received bilingual primary education have difficulties when they enter the general *collège*. Everything they have learned in the national language is not validated. So while they are spectacularly successful in primary school, they have gaps in French in secondary school, with lower proficiency.

What emerges from feedback is the need to reflect on how to improve the bilingual option, as well as to reinforce continuing education (refresher courses) for teachers and to analyse the shortcomings students have in French after being educated in bilingual classes. All these points converge in the call to further develop the training in bilingual teaching.

CONTINUING TRAINING

Educational support is provided by advisers[39] who tour schools. Inspectors and school principals monitor the training on the ground. The ENEP trainers no longer intervene. There is no provision in the legislation for a novice teacher to be monitored more than an experienced teacher. There is an annual educational meeting, the annual conference of teaching supervisors, where ENEP trainers and inspectors gather to work on a particular theme, mainly on planning issues. For disciplinary content, such as reading, there are educational conferences for teachers and refresher courses.

Follow-up training in reading instruction

The advisers lack the logistical means to travel and visit the schools frequently. Digital tools would be welcome. There is also a need for continuing training courses to improve teacher support. The difficulties faced by teachers in various disciplines are methodological. They are the same problems as are reported in the initial training. Teacher/

39- The student supervisors and student educational advisers are currently training in the field; it is teacher advisers who are in direct contact with the training supervisors.

student relations are often problematic in small classes. Children are afraid of the school environment, which is new to them, they pretend to understand, repeating and memorizing without comprehending. Decoding mechanics are not acquired, consequently when the lessons move on to reading fluency the success rate plummets. Teachers can utilize continuing training in various frameworks, which, although they are not disseminated, appear to offer possibilities of adjusting the official guidelines for reading instruction:

- The innovation by the NGO Bambini nel deserto, whose project to improve the conventional reading method is currently in its second year. The experiment concerns five Basic Education District (CEB) classes in Nagreongo. In principle, for the continuing training of teachers, education activity groups (groupes d'animation pédagogique, GAP) are organized around a theme (disciplinary or cross-disciplinary) chosen by teachers who then meet monthly to work on it. This year, the groups were not organized. The Grade 2 teacher did specific training concerning the educational project proposed by the NGO, which published two interactive workbooks entitled *Pour l'apprentissage de la lecture et de l'écriture au CP1* (Learning to Read and Write in Grade 1). A similar workbook exists for Grade 2[40] and it is designed as a 'logical extension' to the Grade 1 workbooks. The other teachers who work with the conventional method did not receive any special training in reading instruction.

- The Grade 2 teacher received reading training in the context of differentiated instruction (group instruction). To support reading instruction, the director has promoted the creation of peer reading groups (five groups), formed by evenly distributing advanced students and students who struggle with reading, while remaining mindful of whether students get on with each other or not. In Grade 2, students work in groups of five on large slates. The text they are reading in class is copied out, on to the slate and read by the group. The best student in the group reads and then the others continue reading. A student is responsible for making a note the of the words they had difficulty with. The students then write out the words they had problems reading on their individual slates. Each student has his or her own reading book. The aspects assessed in reading are text comprehension and attention to punctuation, which favours comprehension (expressive reading in Grade 4). Continuing training courses (educational conferences) have not been held this year. Nor has there been any support from educational advisers on how to teach reading (or visits). The director would be delighted to have a library to supplement the texts provided in the reader: *Lire au Burkina*.

- Training in interactive pedagogy. A Guide to interactive pedagogy in reading instruction was created but not disseminated at a national level. The method was tested by a teacher who continues to use it for his lessons. The inspectors are not trained to understand and evaluate this approach. This new approach was positively evaluated from a technical point of view, but ultimately was not validated at the institutional level. Two teachers at the Koudougou Sud school received training in this approach. The experiment remains limited to a few schools in the area.

40- On the back cover of the CP2 workbook, it is stated that it 'is part of the 2nd year reading manual of the Educational Institute of Burkina'.

The feedback from the educational advisers points to a need to:

- Diversify the media used in reading instruction: any writing can serve as a medium (e.g. calendar, newspaper) to work on reading fluency from Grade 3. Bilingual schools sometimes call on storytellers, which promotes the national culture.
- Vary activities with reading games, for example: reconstructing a sentence that has been studied after mixing up the words or reconstructing words whose syllables are not ordered. For younger classes, it is recommended to make 'words labels' and create a 'word bank', but few teachers do so out of a lack of motivation or stimulation. Sometimes teachers also prepare a booklet themselves, in which they list difficulties for students to work on with a tutor.
- Devote more time to reading games in early learning, considering that taking initiatives is part of the teacher's work.
- Take into account the child's reality, particularly in small classes where Grade 1 students often arrive at school without any French, and in situations where teachers must use the local language to communicate, even in conventional schools. No systematic method exists.
- Organize regular days for teachers to discuss practices so as to further develop practical training (monitoring and discussions) in reading instruction. Indeed, 'We come across good practices in the field but unfortunately we don't manage to capitalize on these experiences (vary the activities).' Properly adapted teaching materials should be designed and created on the basis of teacher initiatives.

Follow-up training in bilingualism

The duration of follow-up training courses is often limited to a period of a few weeks at most (Nikièma, 2010, p. 30). In fact, continuing training in bilingualism depends on the various projects in which teachers are involved. As part of the ELAN project, eight countries have been piloting this new aproach for the last year. The training courses for teachers to teach in ELAN classes currently last 10 days[41].

With regard to training in private schools, depending on the institution, teachers can benefit from additional training. Teachers choose the grade they will teach themselves. For the principal, it is important to place the most experienced teachers in the Grade 5 and Grade 6 classes. Teachers from private schools attended an educational conference on reading (3 days of training) last year.

FINDINGS OF THE ANALYSIS OF TEACHER TRAINING

1. The initial teacher training is dependent on the requirements prescribed in the official methodology. This essential aspect of the training induces stability and consistency in practices. But it can be a hindrance to their development when it comes to introducing new ideas. In particular, with regards to the core concepts (phoneme, grapheme, letter) as well as to variations in practice in the form of reading games.

2. The projects initiated in Burkina Faso (Bambini nel Deserto, ELAN, PAMEB, pedagogy of text) point to ways of improving reading instruction by simplifying it and developing work on comprehension. All partners, especially teachers, enhance their professional expertise by being involved in these projects. Their dissemination remains limited, however, which is certainly prejudicial.

41- Which is considered as insufficient by the teacher interviewed. Although he does acknowledge the positive points of the experience, in particular, the advantage of being able to diversify activities.

KEY POINTS

Based on the foregoing analyses, the following key points may be made.

1. Sentences or series of sentences are not enough to build a written culture. Other texts, closer to the social practices of reading and writing, also appear to be necessary. One must emphasize the focus on communication in the curriculum, students being initiated into written culture from Grade 1 through a range of motivating situations: stories read aloud by the teacher, in national languages, if necessary, and in French; activities where students handle books; comprehension activities using various kinds of texts read aloud by teachers. What matters is not the quantity but the quality of the interactions around the written texts, which must stimulate students' interest.

2. There is a need to work from texts to strengthen the links between language, reading and writing in complex situations, starting with proposals based on the texts in the official manuals but reinforcing the methods involved in using them (cf. PAMEB project).

3. To teach the code, clearly distinguished units covered during the initial teacher training should be introduced: phoneme, grapheme, letter.

4. The role and objectives of reading aloud must be clarified so that this technique is used more purposefully in practice.

5. There is a need to further strengthen practices by developing and disseminating additional activities for the various components of reading, particularly phonological awareness and word recognition, which could be incorporated in reading games. In this regard, requests have been made for images to be supplied, in particular for the initial training.

6. Teachers must be made aware of the need for transitions between the activities proposed in the textbook, for which purpose the lessons and activities objectives must be clarified for the first three years of schooling. Has syllabication the same purpose in first grade and in third grade? Certainly not.

7. Clarify learning outcomes to be met at the end of each level in terms of the operations involved in acquisition of reading, as well as progression

CHAPTER **6**

EARLY READING INSTRUCTION IN NIGER

This chapter conducts an assessment of the reading instruction curriculum in Niger. The analysis is based on the three sources listed below, considered in relation to the first three years of schooling:

- School programmes.
- Textbooks and reading guides.
- Data on teacher training.

The analysis will be broken into two stages, to be followed by a short summary. First, it will look at key information and questions about each of the three above-mentioned components and then, in the second stage, some recommendations are made concerning these different components.

1. OVERVIEW OF CURRICULAR DOCUMENTS: READING INSTRUCTION CURRICULUM IN NIGER IN GRADE 1, GRADE 2 AND GRADE 3.

SCHOOL PROGRAMMES

The analysis conducted in this section occurs in a context of transition. Indeed, following the comprehensive review of the education system conducted during the three phases of the Ten-Year Education Development Plan (Programme Décennal de Développement de l'Education, PDDE) between 2003-2013, Niger moved strongly towards curricular reform centred on a situation-based approach (Approche Par les Situations, APS). This goal, of this important reform, is to raise the quality of education in the fundamental disciplines (namely reading, in accordance with the principles outlined in the curriculum orientation framework document of May 2012; Cadre d'Orientation du Curriculum, COC) and is to be implemented in the framework of the Education and Training Sector Programme (2014-2024).

As Niger has committed to reforming the school system, the only reference document for all stakeholders is supposed to be the COC of May 2012. Nonetheless, to ensure that the analysis is as thorough as possible, it was considered necessary to include all Nigerien curricular documents in the scope of the study, as long as they were in circulation, stamped with an official seal, and cited by the study respondents in the field - although not necessarily taking into account their compatibility with the COC beforehand.

Furthermore, for this section, the following documents have been included:

- *Programmes de l'Enseignement du Premier degré* (Primary-level Teaching Programmes - PEP) (INDRAP, 2013 edition).
- *Guide de l'enseignant/enseignante - Langage français CI* (Guide to Teaching French in Grade 1) (DCIP, September 2013).
- *Guide du maître - Pour lire et pour* écrire (Teacher's Guide: Reading and Writing) (INDRAP, 2001).
- Niger Education System Framework Act - Law no. 98-12 of 1 June 1998.

Overall, these documents advocate an approach to education that is grounded in the sociocultural context. In this regard, as illustrated in the extract below, the COC emphasizes the need to focus on situations and activities that are meaningful for learners, by orienting:

> Learning activities away from fragmented knowledge, perceived in isolation, and towards an integrated body of knowledge necessary for solving school problems and problems faced in everyday life...by investing the content of what students are learning with meaning, competencies are exercised only in relation to situations that are meaningful for the children and are not based on artificial media used as pretexts to have them repeat memorized knowledge (COC, pp. 6-7).

Announcing that the programmes 'above all seek to be both useful and educational' (Programmes de l'Enseignement du Premier degré, p. 7), this document further states that 'by useful, we mean that our teaching must increasingly have an outcome on behaviour and not only result in theoretical knowledge'. For example, one of the objectives of the programme is that: 'upon leaving primary school, the child must be able to...communicate, inform himself, use certain equipment and tools, but also craft certain items by hand...' (p. 7).

For the remainder of this section, most of the information is drawn from the above-mentioned document (Programmes de l'Enseignement du Premier degré, 2013; hereinafter PEP). This document is subdivided into two parts. The first sets out 'official instructions' underscored by 'comments on primary-level programmes'. The second focuses on primary-level 'education programmes'.

Analysis of the official instructions reveals that the subject that is the main focus in this report, reading instruction, appears under the disciplinary configuration of 'French' along with other sub-disciplines such as: *language, pronunciation, reading, sensory and psychomotor exercises, written expression, vocabulary, spelling, grammar and conjugation*. It is worth noting that one of these domains (sensory and psychomotor exercises) does not appear in the COC's guidelines, however, in addition to the eight sub-disciplines listed above, the COC also introduces *recitation* and *writing*.

The curricular requirements pertaining to the disciplinary configuration of French indicate that reading is supposed to be linked to the domains of writing, sensory and psychomotor exercises, spelling and language. This idea is already briefly evoked when reading instruction in Grade 1 is discussed ('the link between language and reading remains the keystone of this first year', p.12), and it is also important to point out that in the chapter on national languages, an explicit link is established between language and reading instruction.

To better understand the nature of these links, each of these four domains is presented below.

WRITING

In Grade 1, the programme does not prescribe writing lessons as such. It suggests working on 'pre-writing exercises to develop discrimination, visual memory and the aptitude for symbolic representation' (p. 7). In Grade 2, written expression is introduced during the second quarter (through small, progressive exercises). It is then from Grade 3 that the two types of targeted writing (i.e. expository texts and literary texts) are included in the programme.

The objective is stated as follows:
- Working from the theme of the week…teach the children to elaborate texts (narration or dialogue) using simple sentences constructed with what they have learned that week.

In national languages, the objective is somewhat differently stated as:
- Teaching the child to easily write a text using all forms of letters (block, cursive) and upper case.

Based on the interview conducted with the Director for Research and Equipment in National Languages (DRELN) and the review by Hamidou Seydou Hanafiou (national expert), it is clear that the new national language readers, that have been produced (by the Ministry of education) for reading instruction in bilingual classes, are in reality a national-language adaptation of the French version of the *Pour lire et pour écrire* collection. Given they have been adapted, it may be inferred that the text written in the national language also starts from a theme, as is the case for the teaching of French. In light of the above, one may provisionally deduce that there are elements in the current textbooks and guides that indicate that a teaching method that truly integrates the dimension of textual comprehension has not yet been fully operationalized. However, it is important to note that new ways of teaching are gradually responding to this fundamental orientation for a better quality of teaching, insofar as the official instructions themselves appear to be shifting towards a communicative approach in the teaching of writing. The analysis of the manuals and guides should confirm or refute this hypothesis.

SENSORY AND PSYCHOMOTOR EXERCISES

The above-mentioned curricular document states that 'along with language, sensory and psychomotor exercises are essential to the preparation of reading and writing etc.'. It recommends that when proposing these *exercises, teachers should take into account 'what is immediately available to children in their everyday lives' (p. 15). Concerning other disciplines, one of the objectives that stands out relates to the configuration of French: The acquisition of a good visual memory (p. 16)*

SPELLING

As French spelling is not transparent (the relationship between graphemes and phonemes is far from one-to-one), it is highly advisable to draw upon a wide range of competencies acquired in other areas of French and especially 'in language (exact distinction of sounds, even when new); reading (knowledge of the various spellings of a sound); grammar (syntactic rules), etc.'

One's attention is draw in particular to the following competence (expressed here in terms of an objective), which is linked to reading:
- Mastering the main spellings of a sound in relation to the context, which requires good hearing and pronunciation (p. 18).

In Grade 1/Grade 2, the 'teacher must encourage all methods to embed the image of the word in the students' minds: careful copying, correct reading, comparison of words.'

In Grade 3, during the spelling lessons, it is recommended to conduct a 'systematic study of the phoneme and its written forms, the phoneme and its grammatical categories, the phoneme and lexical acquisition…' (p. 19).

At this point it should be noted that a large majority of the elements identified above point to strong links between the teaching of spelling and the teaching of deciphering, with the emphasis more on the code and less on comprehension. However, shall be seen in the following section, some of the official instructions regarding lessons on language reinstate comprehension as a central concern and objective.

LANGUAGE

Language is one of the preliminary lessons required to prepare reading. The stated goal here is:
- To study the words and simple structures the child needs to communicate (p. 50).

It should be noted that in addition to the emphasis on communication (for which the main focus is on word use, the variety and flexibility of combinations rather than on the number of words), it is also recommended that teachers work on correct pronunciation (sounds and intonations). However, as no insight is given into the importance, and hence the semantic influence of sounds and to a lesser extent the influence that intonation may have in certain national languages, there is call to question this work on correct pronunciation in the Nigerien context. Indeed, it may be noted that while the multilingual context in Niger could offer opportunities for development and comparisons with national languages or within the same national language, the official instructions do not explore the subject further (in traditional education, but especially bilingual education). They merely state that during the initiation phase it appears necessary to emphasize oral teaching methods that facilitate the training of the ear and the adaptation of the physiological organs of speech to the sounds and phonemes of the French language as well as to the rhythm and intonation it requires' (p. 10). Clearly, these facilitating components are not sufficient in themselves to achieve the communicative purpose of language teaching. In the opinion of the authors of this study, rather than focusing on correct pronunciation, the lessons could go further by making students understand the impact of pronunciation on communication. As it happens, drawing learners' attention to the fact that intonation, whether rising, neutral or of other form, can change the meaning of a word or sentence, and encouraging them to give examples in a national language[42] could help to reinforce this communicative dimension.

READING IN FRENCH

In the official document, reading is defined as follows: 'understanding meaning through the eyes, that is to say discovering, organizing and interpreting the sense of what is written' (p. 12). With language, reading is presented as one of the essential disciplines of basic education. According to the general objective prescribed from Grade 1, school is tasked with an ambitious project where reading is concerned, namely that of 'giving each student a desire to read, an ability to read and a love of reading that will stay with them their whole lives' (p. 12). Beyond this project, it should also be noted that:
- One of the main objectives of primary school is to prepare children for adult reading.

The preparation in question here seeks to directly serve a communicative purpose. The child must feel that 'reading is about deciphering signs loaded with thoughts that express life' (p. 12). It is in this perspective that silent reading is recommended so that from very early on the learner can identify the link between the text and the message. One element the authors of the report believe is important, but which gets lost in all of the information contained in the

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42- For example, in Hausa, 'Yaa tahi/Yaá tahi/Yá tahi' (respectively 'he left/it is very possible that he left/let him leave') do not mean the same thing.

curriculum, and to which the report will return, is the implicit link that can be made with written culture or the initiation into writing. Indeed, the teachers are asked not to forget that 'for many of the students, writing is not a familiar reality. Thus, the teacher will not fail to use all means to stimulate, encourage and develop the desire to read' (p.13). There is potential to this approach and the report will return to this question later on to analyse how it takes form in the field.

First, the manner in which this disciplinary configuration is expressed in the official teaching materials will be considered below.

2. TEXTBOOKS AND READING GUIDES

To better understand the context in which the educational materials are supposed to provide answers, this section will start with an overview of the key information about methods contained in the primary-level teaching programme of 2013 (Programmes de l'Enseignement du Premier degré, PEP). Subsequently, it will analyse the manuals and guides used in the cycles concerned by this study.

The PEP advocates a very open approach (synonymous with a variety of sources) for all French teaching in the selection of facts, situations, texts and documents. For example, it advises teachers to not restrict themselves to studying literary texts, saying they should also think about using 'authentic documents (identity cards, newspaper advertisements and notices, prescriptions, invoices, telegrams, recipes, etc.)' (p. 10).

Similarly, the PEP adopts the following position with regard to choosing a method of reading instruction: 'One method cannot be imposed on all. Common sense and current developments in pedagogy argue in favour of an active, lively and practical method: a mixed method grounded in a whole-word approach' (p. 13).

Moreover, regarding the programmes, the PEP simply presents an outline of what must be taught (in French or in the national language), leaving it to the manuals and guides to operationalize the official instructions.

Thus, in Grade 1, for example, it is recommended that reading instruction be 'based on language acquisitions and the study of key words that started in week 5, as, strictly speaking, learning to read will not commence until week 9' (p. 50). For this purpose, the list of keywords (below) is given by the PEP as a guide (*Ali - Mina - voici - et - la balle - une - tête - Sani - moto - a - le - père - papa - pipe - mère - fume - est - de - Mariama - bonjour - chante - vélo - un feu - jardin - va - vite - kola*). It should be specified that this list is supposed to be derived from the language lessons organized by theme (family, school, games etc.). In addition to the list of keywords, a list of vowels (simple and compound) is provided, as well as a list of consonants.

For Grade 2, the only indication given is that of 'systematically repeating the Grade 1 programme on the basis of one sound per day' (p. 51).

In Grade 3, it is recommended to start with revision (thus indicating the importance accorded to this activity over the years of study) so as to 'enable the child to master the mechanics of reading' (p. 55). The rest of the programme advocates the 'fluent reading of simple texts of various kinds', and it is also recommended to put 'particular emphasis' on silent reading. It may be pointed out that the particular emphasis on silent reading is more prevalent in Grade 1 and Grade 2. Indeed, very frequently associated with the Martinière method (Procédé La Martinière, PLM)[43], silent reading holds a very important place whether in the official instructions, the manuals or the teacher guides. However, reading aloud seems to be considered as less important, as one of the objectives is 'to instil in the students the behaviour of an adult reader who, in most cases, does not read aloud when reading' (Pour lire et pour écrire, Grade 3, p. 3).

Without refuting the importance of silent reading, it would seem that over time, the imbalance created by this choice could, for several reasons, be detrimental to truly initiating learners into written culture. First, where silent reading is concerned, even if there is an exchange between the teacher and learners through PLM, the work is more oriented towards the evaluation of certain acquisitions (phoneme, syllable, words, vocabulary, etc.) that do not sufficiently mobilize comprehension activities in reading due to the primary focus on deciphering and decoding. The latter dimensions are certainly important, however, the reading instruction should not stop there, even in the early stages! As pointed out in Chapter 1, introducing activities based on reading aloud helps to develop students' abilities to understand texts in their diversity. It is therefore worth reasserting that it is important to leave room for texts or comic books designed for young people and that they can read aloud, and to do so from the earliest stages of schooling. In the opinion of the authors of this study, this kind of approach is extremely productive if teachers emphasize it, generate interest in it and equip their students with the tools they need to derive meaning from the writing.

After this preliminary analysis, the next section will examine the different means employed by actors on the ground. It begins by taking a historical overview so that the reader can better appreciate the present context. This section is the work of Hamidou Seydou Hanafiou (national expert), who analyses the first two generations of textbooks. It will be followed by a review of the third generation of textbooks and official guides, which are the ones currently in use.

MANUALS AND GUIDES: FRENCH (SECOND LANGUAGE) READING MANUALS IN TRADITIONAL SCHOOL: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

As one may imagine, the review of the methods used to teach French in Niger closely follows the history of schooling in Niger through the various reforms that have punctuated its development. One must keep in mind in this regard that, as a former French colony, in the aftermath of independence, Niger's sole language of instruction was French, which was not the first language of any Nigerien child. French was and remains taught as a second language in Niger. The methods of teaching French differ from one period to another.

....
43- PLM is a technique based on using slates to collectively work on mental calculation, enabling the teacher to quickly assess student responses. The approach is practised in some classes in Niger and Burkina Faso to assess the correct spelling of words learned during reading. This is how it works: each student has a slate and chalk, the teacher gives an instruction orally (often to write a word) then gives the signal to start writing (tapping the desk), the students start writing, the teacher gives another tap to indicate to the students that the allotted time to respond has expired. The students raise their slates and the teacher goes through the rows to check the answers. The teacher points out mistakes. The correction is done collectively: one student will write the word on the board and can be helped by the comments of other students or the teacher and students who have made a mistake correct it individually on their slates.

To better understand the methods used to teach French in Niger, various books or textbooks used for this purpose will be presented. The reforms made to the system as a whole, but particularly reforms that have affected the primary level, and more specifically reforms related to reading instruction will also be taken into account.

The analysis begins by citing three generations of manuals   that moreover correspond to three visions of French instruction. The works often correspond to educational reforms undertaken by the Nigerien government.

The first generation of manuals in French

In the aftermath of independence, in order to adapt Nigerien school to African and Nigerien realities, the education authorities began replacing the manuals used during the colonial period. They replaced them with manuals that were considered better adapted to the country's sociocultural realities. These manuals, entitled *Mamadou et Bineta* (Mamadou and Bineta) and *Mamadou et Bineta sont devenus grands* (Mamadou and Bineta are big now) were used in several Francophone West African countries.

Figure 6.1: Front covers of Mamadou et Bineta and Mamadou et Bineta sont devenus grands

Mamadou et Bineta was intended for initiation levels, namely Grade 1 and Grade 2. As for *Mamadou et Bineta sont devenus grands*, it was geared towards 'the middle and upper levels of primary schools in Black Africa', which corresponds to Grades 5 and 6.

The introduction of these manuals into schools in Niger followed a critical analysis of the books used up to then, which were considered as unsuitable both from the point of view of their content and their approach. *Mamadou et Bineta* was also called the 'new syllabary ', which says a lot about the method proposed. These manuals were in fact an initiative of two personalities of the French education system of the time, namely Mr A. Davesne, a school inspector and Mr. J. Gouin, a former primary school principal. They were published by EDICEF, 26, rue des Fossés-St-Jacques, 75005 Paris in 1952, for the first edition.

The syllabary, *Mamadou et Bineta*, contains 88 pages and is divided into 62 lessons covering the fundamentals of reading for the initial grades. It presents a weekly breakdown of reading lessons (pages 9-10) as well as advice to the teachers with Grade 2 students (pp. 11-12).

Figure 6.2: Breakdown of weekly reading lessons in Mamadou et Bineta

Figure 6.3: Advice to teachers

Mamadou et Bineta sont devenus grands is 412 pages long. In the first pages (p. 3-7), the authors provide guidelines explaining their pedagogical method to teachers.

Where *Mamadou et Bineta* is concerned, the approach used for this generation of manuals is the so-called syllabic approach, developed in response to criticisms of the whole-word method that prevailed previously. The authors of this work indicate that 'The syllabic method constructs all its lessons according to the same plan: first, the review of an 'example word' or 'key word' (illustrated by a drawing) that presents the sound being studied; then, syllable formation and, immediately after, the reading of words, sentences, and stories.' Moreover, 'the syllabic method is, not only for the teacher, but also for students, a practical way of building new knowledge on acquired knowledge; it gives a lot of scope to the child's individual work; it doesn't require the constant intervention of the teacher; it adjusts easily to the conditions of daily life; more than any other method, it adapts to late starts to the school year and the irregular attendance so customary among young children.'

The above paragraph shows that the authors of this initiative believe that they have taken into account the active role of the teacher in the teaching process. Even late starts to lessons and student attendance problems are not supposed to affect learning.

A sample reading lesson starts from the drawing of an object for example (in Lesson 1, a canary) that contains the sound/grapheme to be studied. The teacher is supposed to show the canary to the students. The word is written under the drawing. The teacher then pronounces it, stressing the sound being studied. When writing the name of the drawn object, the teacher may write the sound being studied in colour. The next step is the composition of a reading table upon which the teacher writes the letter in question on one, two or three lines. The students then go up to the board, often using the big ruler or a stick to point to the studied letter as they sound it out. The reading of the letter will generally be followed by exercises to identify this same letter in other words. During these exercises, the teacher will show the students that the letter can be at the beginning, middle or end of the word.

For this entire process, the teachers are supposed to take account of the practical advice given on page 11 of the book. That said, one of the features of this approach is that it encourages memorization much more than real learning. It is also characterized as a frontal method (with regard to the teacher-student relationship).

As for *Mamadou et Bineta sont devenus grands*, it should be noted that this manual is designed for Grade 5 and 6 students. Thus, the pedagogical ambitions are much broader than at the initiation level (*Mamadou et Bineta*). The lessons here all involve areas of knowledge of the workings of the French language, including grammar, vocabulary and spelling. The document begins with the authors' guidelines to teachers. Then comes a series texts to work on all aspects of the French language. Given that this report does not take into account the level for which this manual is intended, a list of the educational guidelines is provided in the appendices.

The second generation of French manuals

In the second generation of manuals, there is still a search for books that match the culture and concerns of the education authorities. After several meetings on these issues, Niger, like many countries in Francophone West Africa, adopted new reading materials, in this case *La famille Boda* (The Boda Family) and *Afrique mon Afrique* (Africa My Africa) in the early 70s.
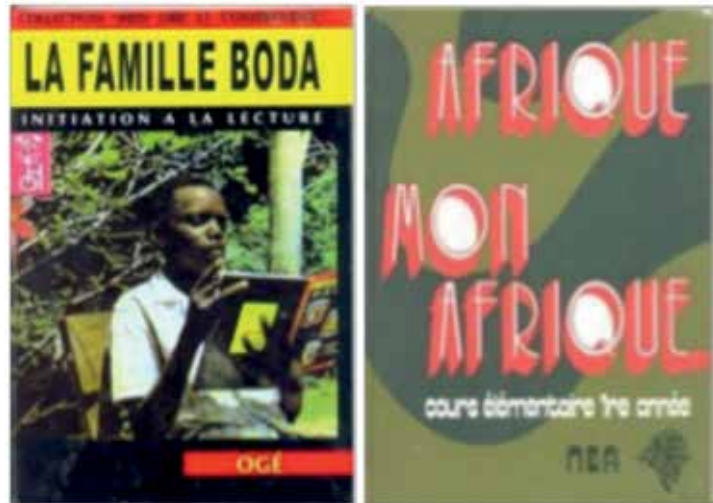
Figure 6.4: Front covers of La famille Boda and Afrique mon Afrique

These books arrived in Niger when Mr Tranchard was appointed as advisor to the Minister of Education. Mr Tranchard had developed a number of books, especially language books, for most of the Sahel, to replace the old works that had been in use up to then.

From a cultural point of view, these manuals have been widely criticized for relating more to a central African culture, where society is very different to that of the Sahel (meals at tables, the use of sinks). There was also the difference of environments: rainforest features in *Afrique mon Afrique*. It's always good to open up to the rest of the world, but there were many more things that did not fit with the realities of West Africa. It was for all these reasons that the new guidelines stipulated the importance of taking children's social and natural environment into account as well as their culture.

These textbooks applied the whole-word method in the younger classes (Grades 1-3). This involved the creation of labels as a pre-reading activity; the child was sometimes presented with a two-sided label (signifier/signified). In this approach, the students start from the sentence, which is segmented into words; subsequently they segment from word to syllable and from syllable to letter, to then work on the letter to be studied.

ANALYSIS OF TEXTBOOKS AND OFFICIAL GUIDES FROM THE CURRENT CONTEXT

This section focuses solely on so-called third-generation textbooks and guides. Just one series, *Pour lire et pour* écrire, is currently in use. The preface specifies that this textbook has been designed while taking the PEP requirements into account, with which it is in compliance. It therefore reproduces and restates the official instructions. The textbook designers speak of 'an action-based pedagogy that aims to instruct while stimulating interest'. This twofold objective is to be achieved through teaching activities and situations that are designed to actively involve students in the learning process by making it enjoyable. The link between writing, language and reading is reaffirmed.

Written culture

Each page features illustrations of scenes drawn from the learner's sociocultural environment, as well as various images (for instance in the Grade 3 textbook) representing an example of writing or an authentic document.

Is this omnipresence of images and/or illustrations indicative of a desire to nurture the students' sensitivity to written culture? Additionally, the first lessons are set aside to familiarize students with their textbook: teachers are asked to do a series of seven pre-reading sessions with students, over the course of one week, to help them discover their textbook and understand its logic!

Figure 6.5: Example of authentic document in textbook

The first session is organized around an exercise called 'Examining the book and the pages'. The students are asked to progressively analyse 'the cover' along with the back cover. The idea is to have the students describe what they see. Then, while facing in the same direction as the learners, the teacher asks them to examine the pages. This exercise focuses on the spatial structure of the book, having the learner identify subdivisions (left page, right page, top of the page, bottom of the page, etc.) in various combinations. The student is asked to point to parts of the page or to describe what is pointed at.

The second session, entitled 'Examining the first image and the bubbles', is linked to the first. When learners spatially locate the object defined by the teacher, they are then asked to describe it freely. Then the focus turns to the image containing the bubbles. The idea is to get learners to understand the mechanics of the speech bubbles: the teacher draws the characters and then the bubbles, taking care to properly direct the tail of the bubble into the mouth of the speaker.

In the third session, the students are asked to focus on 'identifying the two lines of dialogue'. As previously, the teacher uses questions and answers to assist the identification. This exercise appeals to the learners' capacity for analysis, requiring them to identify the lines of dialogue, to say whom they belong to and make out the number of words in a line of dialogue. The work on lines of dialogue is also an opportunity to introduce punctuation signs and the meaning they can convey.

The organization of the lessons around 'icons and instructions' is the essential focus of the fourth session. The students learn how to identify and understand the instructions they will be very frequently receiving with regard to the following activities: 'you read, you practise, you write.' This is also an opportunity for the teacher to present the signs of the book (circle, star, cross, etc.), which learners will be using very frequently when answering questions according to the Martinière method.
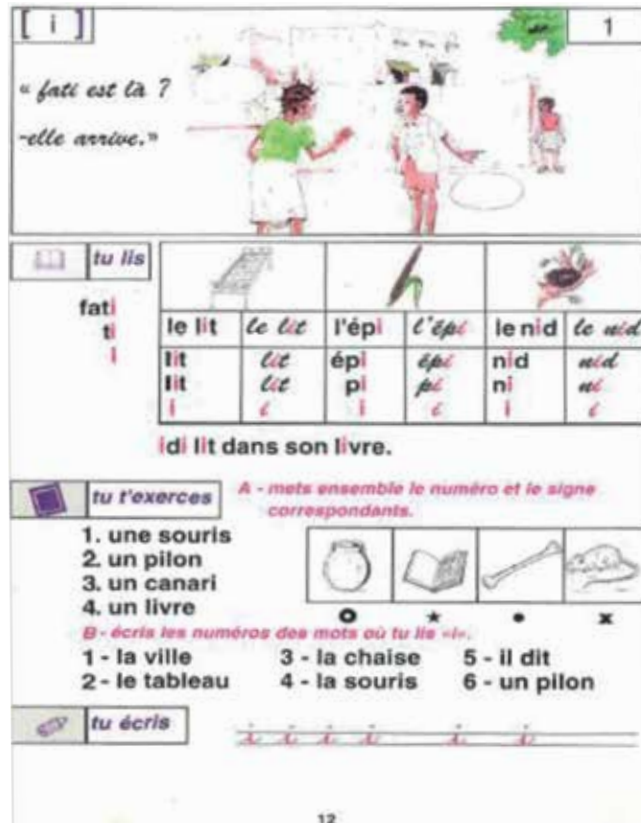
Figure 6.6: Example of lesson sequence in textbook based on /i/

The fifth, sixth and seventh sessions mainly consist of revision exercises to more solidly establish the studied concepts and to prepare the study of sounds that will come after this week of textbook familiarization.

Generally speaking, the images used in the textbooks and textual media point to a desire to diversify, both in terms of layout and the size and type of text. Where the layout is concerned, the textbook designers have worked from the principle that 'knowing how to read is not just about deciphering words, also means knowing how to understand a page layout: text arranged in columns like in the newspapers, the double-entry tables used in mathematics and science diagrams and captions; all so many different ways of presenting texts that act as:

- A preparation for understanding the important role of the spatial arrangement of signs, whether on a page or on a map, on a poster or on a screen;
- A means of opening up the scope of reading beyond literary texts alone;
- A means of connecting to other educational disciplines.'

One may reasonably ask why teachers are offered no example of comparative work or exercises to further develop this diversity in the textbook or the teaching guide. Surely this would provide a source of inspiration?

Comprehension of texts and writing

In terms of the texts, the textbook designers start from short, simple sentence structures and work up to more complex structures (Noun Group + Verb Group; Noun Group 1 + Verb Group + Noun Group 2; etc.). In Grade 1, there is a frequent use of dialogues. Indeed, the study of the sound is always triggered by a dialogue contained in the framed illustration (on the left page). To complement the illustration, the authors propose a text (on the right page) for each unit. Two textual typologies are prevalent in the majority of the extracts: narrative texts (fairy tales, adventure stories, etc.) and expository texts (biographies, news items, testimonies, etc.). Nearly exactly the same principle applies in Grade 2, the only difference being that in addition to the extracts used in Grade 1, a few poems, songs and riddles are included. From Grade 3, the learning unit ceases to be organized around sound and is configured around 'speech acts', which in fact take the form of texts. Through this new configuration, the authors draw on a wide range of texts in the two types of writing (prescribed the by official documents) that, the teaching of the discipline is supposed to target, that is to say, 'expository texts (instructions, letters, articles, etc.) and literary texts (stories, poems, fiction, etc.)' (PEP, p. 17).

For textual comprehension, the proposed exercises are designed to train students to read silently (as most frequently practiced by adults). The illustrations assist the silent reading and facilitate access to the meaning of the texts. With the help of the illustrations, this silent reading is supposed to enable the students to extract the essential information in record time. Thus, through the use of the PLM, the learners are constantly called on to mobilize a range of reading strategies to check their level of comprehension of the texts.

However, it should be noted that the manner in which the recommended exercises and activities are oriented is really not likely to allow learners to grasp the communicative scope of the proposed texts. Certainly, there are comprehension activities, but it is clear that these activities are directed more towards identifying elements related to understanding words or to the mechanical workings of a text. In other words, the proposed activities are strongly geared to checking learners' reading-decoding abilities without expanding on this work and orienting it towards other possibilities of comprehension that are fundamental to the act of reading.

Teaching the code

The guide proposes an approach to studying a sound over seven sessions.

The purpose of the first session is to 'identify the sound aurally'. It should be noted that this sound is contained in the words or phrases spoken by the teacher and derived from the language lessons. To facilitate the recognition of the sound, the teacher makes use of the framed illustration and has students play the characters while facing the class.

The second session proposes to have the students 'discover the spelling of the sound' by reading dialogues and words placed in boxes. In the lines of dialogue, the students must first isolate the word and then segment it. As the boxes that come after the dialogues only contain words, the work proposed here mainly revolves around 'Tracking words and highlighting spellings'.

The third session is devoted to the first written exercise (or 'Exercise A'). This exercise requires a lot of attention and concentration from the learners in order to be completed properly. It is done through PLM.

For the fourth session, the teacher has the learners 'read the right page'. While silently reading the text on the right page, the students identify words containing the sound being studied.

The fifth session proposes an exercise B, presented as being a bit harder than the previous one. Even if they are virtually the same types of exercises, the progressive increase of difficulty prompts the authors to recommend starting with exercise A, before moving to exercise B.

The sixth session is then devoted to a general revision. The teacher has the learners read the two pages silently to do 'two or three visual identification exercises'. The session ends with a read-aloud.

The seventh session aims to 'consolidate acquisitions'. This consolidation occurs through follow-up exercises.

In general, the teaching of the code is designed in such a way as to get learners to 'recognize the spelling being studied...words are segmented so that the child can distinguish the letters'. It should be noted that in the 'you write' section of the textbook, there is also another type of exercise proposed, where the learner uses the studied sound to write other words containing this sound. Whenever possible, the textbook provides words with different ways of writing the same sound (in the 'you read' section); but it is really from Grade 2 that sound discrimination is emphasized. The objective here is to have 'students get used to distinguishing between the phonological code of the spoken language and the graphic code of the written language'.

The learning process therefore starts with the discovery and sounding out of words, before work on phoneme-grapheme correspondence. This graphophonemic correspondence gradually becomes more complex. Thus, by stimulating the learners' attention while enabling them to develop the ability to find and match the language sounds to letters, they are trained to develop phonemic awareness.

Progression

A general progression over three stages is foreseen in Grade 1:

- A pre-reading period that lasts for four weeks. This period comprises sensory and graphic exercises that are considered as essential before tackling reading instruction in the right conditions.
- A period of global acquisitions that lasts five weeks and that consists of acquiring a word as a whole, learning to read and write it without trying to segment it, that is to say without showing students that is composed of sounds and letters.
- The study of the forms that sounds take in writing, which begins in January and lasts until the end of the school year.

For the progression between Grade 1 and Grade 2, according to the textbook designers, sounds are selected while taking into account pronunciation issues and difficulties writing graphemes. This selection also takes into account 'the frequency with which these graphemes occur in oral or written communications'. While all the sounds studied

in Grade 1 are systematically revised in Grade 2, the logic of progression proposed by the teacher's guide and the textbook *Pour lire et pour écrire* advocates going from the simplest spelling of a sound in Grade 1 to studying the different spellings of the same sound in Grade 2, when the sound lends itself to the exercise. An example of this progression is shown below with the phoneme /f/.

Figure 6.7: Example of /f/ in Grade 1

Figure 6.8: Example of /f/ in Grade 2

In Grade 3, a progression guided by sounds is abandoned in favour of one guided by speech activities.

From one lesson to the next, the textbook designers clearly see the need to rethink the progression by making connections between domains. Thus, for example, the educational guidelines in the textbook specify that 'the teacher will be mindful of seeking out correspondences between the sound to be studied and the language lesson done previously'. In terms of difficulty, the teacher is advised to work from simple to more complex exercises.

CHAPTER 6..

Before commencing the analysis of the different parts that make up this section, it is important to point out that the decline in the quality of teaching and learning in basic education (in particular in the fundamental disciplines) explains the recent proliferation of bilingual or national-language education initiatives. The same applies to the project to overhaul the core curriculum undertaken by Niger, the latest version of which is organized around a situation-based learning approach (APS). This section, written by Hamidou Seydou Hanafiou (national expert), will not be reviewing the history of bilingual education in Niger over the last few decades; interested readers are invited to refer to the LASCOLAF report on Niger produced by Mallam Garba and Seydou Hanafiou (2010). Instead, the scope of the analysis will be limited to a summary of recent initiatives in the field of bilingual education.

Reading and writing instruction in NECS schools

Niger Education and Community Strengthening (NECS), is a complex programme with several components, one of which concerns accelerated reading instruction (apprentissage rapide de la lecture, ARL) in the early grades of primary school. The others concern deworming children, promoting education for girls, building or rebuilding wells, and providing literacy instruction for parents with a view to them taking ownership of educational activities within their community. It is the second phase of an initial programme called IMAGINE, entirely devoted to the construction of school classes and drilling water points.

Funded by USAID in the framework of the Millennium Challenge Corporation, NECS is implemented by the NGO Plan International, Niger, with the support of the NGOs Aide et Action Niger and Volontaires pour l'Intégration Éducative (VIE) for the education component. It started in February 2013, somewhat later than originally planned, but the introduction of the ARL approach didn't become effective until January 2014. It concerns 150 villages in all regions of Niger, except Niamey.

Due to random sampling, four of the five piloted national languages were retained but the material produced by NECS comprises fifteen published works evenly distributed as follows.

	Works	Fulfulde	Hausa	Kanuri	Songhay- Zarma	Tamajaq
1	Teacher's guide	1	1	1	1	1
2	Student's workbook	1	1	1	1	1
3	Collection of texts	1	1	1	1	1
	Total	**3**	**3**	**3**	**3**	**3**

Table 6.1 Planned documents
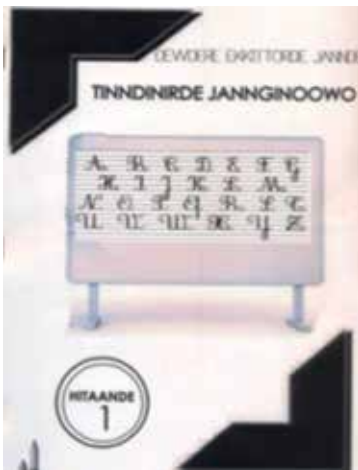
Figure 6.9: Teacher guide

Figure 6.10: Student workbook
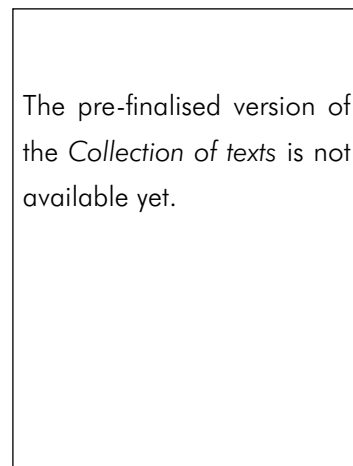
The pre-finalised version of the *Collection of texts* is not available yet.

Figure 6.11: Collection of texts

This is the pedagogical approach it uses:

Step 1: Revision.

Step 2: Phonemic awareness (recognizing sounds).

Step 3: Phonetics (sound of the letter).

Step 4: Reading decodable words (slow and fast reading of words).

Step 5: Sight words to be memorized.

Step 6: Reading comprehension.

Step 7: Expressive reading.

ELAN reading and writing programme

The pilot programme for accelerated reading and writing instruction was initiated by the ELAN Africa Programme with a substantial financial contribution from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). It was implemented in the eight countries of the ELAN programme for a period of three years (2013-2015). For each country, they selected one national language, 10 control schools and 10 pilot schools (all bilingual) to test the ELAN approach in the first year of primary school in the 2013-2014 school year. Some countries, notably the Democratic Republic of Congo and Senegal, went beyond the agreed linguistic limit.

Half of the twenty (20) schools in Niger were selected in the Niamey region and half in the Maradi region, in compliance with the two categories of schools required. The national language of instruction was to be Hausa, which has been the primary language of bilingual experimentation in Niger since 1973. It is also sufficiently documented and a majority language. Of all the educational innovations focused on reading and writing, it is currently the only one to have extended its research over a full school year.

The ELAN approach was designed and conceptualized by the members of the ELAN programme's International Scientific Committee (ISC). It was based on the most fruitful bilingual experiments and ARL implemented in Mali in the PHARE programme (Programme Harmonisé d'Appui au Renforcement de l'Éducation) funded by USAID, launched on 29 October 2008 and suspended in 2012 due to the crisis in Mali.

The reference document for the development of ELAN materials was the *Guide d'orientation à l'approche bi-pluri-lingue de la lecture-écriture* (Orientation Guide to the Bi-Multilingual Approach to Reading-Writing), produced in 2013.

Figure 6.12: The cover page of the first part of the ELAN Guide

This guide is designed to improve students' reading and writing skills in a national language/French bilingual context, while developing their abilities to communicate with ease orally and in writing in both languages, during the first three years of primary school. It has two main parts (see pp. 6-7 of the guide). The first focuses on the basic principles of reading and writing from a bilingual or multilingual perspective, the explanation of the recommended method, the types of tools to use and a reference glossary listing the concepts employed. The second part provides indicators of competencies in reading and writing, the domains of competency and corresponding resources, a timeline of the chronological process of learning in both languages and examples of activities related to the domains of competency and resources. It acts a kind of handbook for the teacher and the designer of teaching materials based on the ELAN approach.

The second-year orientation guide has already been produced but it was not possible to consult it for this report. Independently of the books (guides and textbooks) on the official programme of bilingual schools, the documentation made available to the teachers participating in the experiment and their supervisors is a kit consisting of three documents from the ELAN orientation guide: the teacher manual, the student workbook and the teacher toolkit. The only document available in Hausa is the workbook; those intended for teachers are in French. The copies of the document covers shown below give an idea of their style, particularly where Niger is concerned.

| Figure 6.13: Teacher manual | Figure 6.14: Student workbook | Figure 6.15: Toolkit |
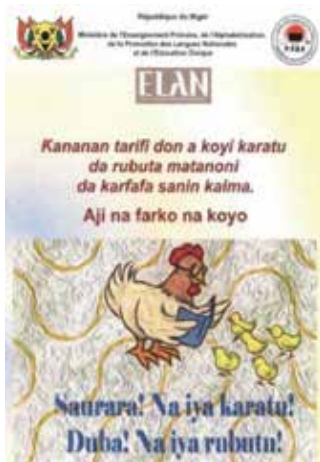
Working from a jointly produced student workbook, all the countries set up national teams who, after being trained, adapted it to their curricula while taking into account the cultural and linguistic context.

The general principles of reading and writing instruction were identified as:

- Bilingualism.
- Understanding the links between the two languages so as to teach them better.
- Facilitating the transfer to French.
- Use of games.
- Guided reading.
- Guided writing.

The reading method was based on:

- Identifying words.
- Decoding new words.
- Separating sounds into boxes.
- Finding little words that are known inside bigger words.
- Separating words into syllables.
- Games and the international phonetic alphabet.

ELAN proposes an introduction to the alphabet with an illustrated presentation of all the letters of the alphabet in upper and lower cases, along with example words. The student, knowing the meaning of the word, identifies its sounds and must be able to sing them in the form of nursery rhymes. Classes begin immediately with short paragraphs of two or three sentences from which words are extracted through fill-in-the-blank exercises, and reused. But the reading lesson always starts with class news.

Reading and writing in the experimental programme run by the NGO CONCERN

The experimental programme, run by the NGO CONCERN Niger, is implemented in the Commune of Bambèye located in the Tahoua department. It encompasses 32 traditional schools and involves only one national language, Hausa. CONCERN benefits from the scientific support and technical collaboration of SIL International to develop its teaching tools. The CONCERN experiment started in 2013 and currently applies to Grade 1.

Two documents have been produced to implement reading and writing instruction in schools monitored by CONCERN, a teacher's guide and an alphabetical map, as shown below.

Figure 6.16: Teacher's guide   Figure 6.17: Alphabet (over 2 pages)
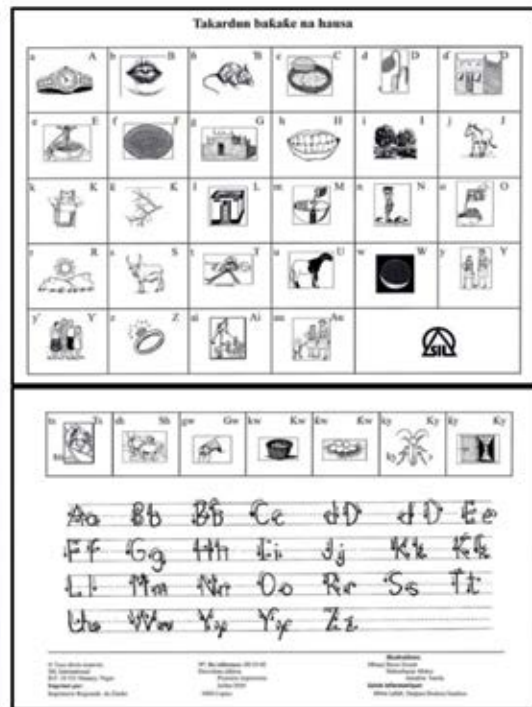
As with the NECS sites, the CONCERN documents are intended for teachers who have never studied their national languages. A syllabic approach is used. In an illustrated sample word, all the letters of the day are isolated. The syllables are then broken down into their final components. These are put back together in different combinations to produce new syllables that will in turn give rise to complete words with meaning, until the exercise returns to the initial word.

The first lesson illustrates this approach. From the word 'Kaka', which means 'grandmother' and is accompanied by an illustration, the letters 'k', 'K', 'a' and 'A' are isolated. The combination of 'k' and 'a' will yield 'ka', which will in turn be segmented into 'k' and 'a'. Then various permutations of letter combinations are written out in columns and rows as in the sample lesson below.

Kaka K k a A			
ka	aka	kak	kaka
k a	a ka	kak	ka ka
akka	kakka	akka	kakka
ak ka	kak ka	ak ka	Kak ka
ka		ak	
A A a A		k K k K	
Kaka			
K k a A			

Students are expected to identify sounds in all the positions and to read the invented words. This develops their phonemic awareness, sense of observation and hearing. Unlike traditional approaches, they may study one or more sounds, upper case and lower case, cursive and print all in the course of a single lesson Students start from an audible and understandable word and come back to the same word after segmentation and blending exercises. The lesson starts with the simplest letters (b, d, k, etc.) to work up to the most complex ones, the hooked letters specific to Hausa derived from Latin letters (b, d, k, etc.). When a sufficient number of letters has been studied, students move on to studying texts.

Reading and writing in the Ministry of Education's situation-based approach (APS)

The overhaul of the basic education curriculum, including formal and non-formal education, has been underway in Niger for more than a decade. The decision was made to abandon pedagogy by objectives (PPO) and its various incarnations in favour of a new educational paradigm: the competency-basedapproach (CBA). After vain attempts to set up an experimental apparatus, and in light of the failure of CBA in some countries (Madagascar and Tunisia in particular), Niger, while working under the scientific supervision of the Observatory of Educational Reforms (Observatoire des Réformes Educatives, ORE), opted in 2010 for a situation-based approach (APS). Indeed, for the advocates of CBA, a curriculum can be designed on the basis of at least three points of entry: knowledge, a competency framework and life situations.

Meanwhile, the Department of Initial and Continuing Training (Direction de la Formation Initiale et Continue, DFIC) continued to train the supervisors of the teacher training colleges (Écoles Normales d'Instituteurs) in CBA and the graduates of these colleges were often confronted in the field with several hybrid approaches including the PPO and a content-based approach.

Since 2011, the Ministry for Education has finalized its position, settling on APS as the exclusive pedagogical framework for the reform of its curriculum and subsequently the training of teachers and their supervisors. Technical teams have been set up and have developed syllabi designed for various levels and types of education within primary teaching. They have also adopted a strategy of gradually introducing experimentation with the new approach and managing the transition to it, created a situations bank of the child's life and produced teaching materials for Grade 1.

A total of forty-five books (see appendix for full list) were produced and tested in schools during 2013-14 and then finalized before being introduced into some 500 bilingual schools across the country. The target languages are the five national languages already piloted and literary Arabic. Three series of books were made for each of the six languages and for all domains of learning in Grade 1: guides, textbooks and syllabi. With regard to reading and writing instruction, the following works may be listed.

	Types	Languages	Titles
1	Programme	Zarma	Syllabus
2	Textbook	Zarma	Zarma textbook Grade 1
3	Guide	Zarma	Zarma Teaching Guide Grade 1
4	Guide	French	Guide to teaching French as a second language

Table 6.2 Example of material for a grade 1, Zarma class

The approach taken to reading and writing is not explicitly stated in the APS materials, but appears to be hybrid and strongly inspired by the holistic learning model implemented in the bilingual schools in which it was piloted. This is due to the fact that APS is based on bilingualism. It starts from a language lesson to then do a reading lesson and a writing lesson. The same theme is studied throughout this series of disciplines.

The versions of the books examined for this study present an approach that goes from the sentence to the word, then to the syllable and finally to the letter. Substitution exercises are used to construct new words. Little room is granted to invented words and only one sound is studied at a time. In the learning progression, students start with lower case in the first year and deal with upper case at a later stage.

Comparison of the different approaches

All approaches agree on the use of the local language as a tool to improve students' reading and writing skills but the implementation contexts and operational strategies differ.

- The NECS and CONCERN projects operate in monolingual schools where instruction in the local language is strictly delimited: students learn the national language with a view to transferring it into French. The two projects focus on one single dimension of learning: reading and writing. No other discipline is taught in the local language and the teachers are not trained to do so. They master their languages orally but their writing ability is very limited, almost at the same level as that of their own students.

- As the ELAN and APS programmes are based on a bilingual substratum, the national languages are the dominant languages of instruction during the first three years of primary education across all disciplines. Almost all the innovations combine reading instruction with writing instruction and establish the essential link between oral and written practices. Reading and writing appear together everywhere on the titles of publications, either in French or in the national language (karatu da rubutu, 'reading and writing'), whereas on the CONCERN document, only reading is mentioned (koyon karatu, 'learning to read').

- All the projects, with the exception of that of the Ministry, use the EGRA approach to assess learning outcomes. They already have the base line to use as a benchmark.

3. TEACHER AND SUPERVISOR TRAINING

In keeping with the focus of the study, the following section simply analyses the types of training often cited in the specialized literature, namely: Initial Training (hereinafter IT) and Continuing Training (hereinafter CT). The fieldwork has brought to light the existence of a particular category in the Nigerien context: Accelerated Training (hereinafter AT). To take stock of these types of training, the following section first examines how they affect teachers and then look at how they apply to supervisors.

TEACHER TRAINING

For the purposes of this report, this section will be limited to the training of primary teachers, the level of education with which the study is concerned. It starts by discussing IT, continues with CT and concludes with AT.

Initial training of student teachers

Teacher training is conducted in the Écoles Normales d'Instituteurs (hereinafter ENI). Niger now has seven ENI, located in the regions of Agadez, Diffa, Dosso, Maradi, Tahoua, Tillaberi and Zinder. It should also be noted that, very soon, assuming the parliament votes in favour of the measure, four additional ENI will be opened (in principle in Doutchi, Magaria, Niamey and Tessaoua) to respond to the need for qualified teachers. The ENI training courses last one or two years depending on the admission profiles of the student teachers (hereinafter ST).

ST who enter with the junior secondary school diploma (brevet d'études du premier cycle, BEPC) train for 2 years and upon graduation obtain an end of studies certificate (Certificat de fin d'études des Écoles Normales, CFEEN) as an Assistant Primary Teacher. ST who hold the senior secondary school diploma (baccalauréat) upon admission are trained for one year and obtain a CFEEN as a Primary Teacher at the end of their training.

The teaching content is the same for the two options; the only thing that differs is the length of the training, which is shortened for the ST training to be full primary teachers. The training proposed in the ENI is based on alternating theory and practice, and is organized (progressively) around three Training Units (hereinafter TU) based on the primary school sub-cycles (TU1= Grades 1-2; TU2 = Grades 3-4; TU3 = Grade 5-6). The training modules that are proposed adhere to this alternating model and supervisors ensure it is operationalized in their seminars. In order of importance, these are the modules covered in the training:

- Educational psychology (weighting 3).
- Didactics of disciplines (weighting 3).
- Maths and French (weighting 2).
- Professional ethics and legislation, physical education and sports, national languages, sociology of education: (weighting 1).

It should be noted that the French content is primarily intended for ST training to be assistant teachers and whose level of French is very low, precisely with the aim of improving their level over the two years of training.

For French, the teaching of each module (language, reading, writing, written expression, recitation, grammar/conjugation/spelling, everyday/theoretical or meta vocabulary) breaks down into four phases, namely:

- An exploratory phase (gathering representations);
- A basic learning phase;
- An integration/training phase;
- A transfer phase.

If one examines the precise case of ST training in reading for Grade 1-2 for example, one can see that it focuses on two elements:
- Pre-reading (subdivided into three components: letter-drawing, sensory exercises, the acquisition of global skills);

Reading in the strict sense, which is concretely accomplished as follows:

- Exploratory phase: gathering student teachers' representations of reading instruction: reading, sheet, framed illustration, study of a sound, letter forms, bubble, read-alouds, silent reading, etc.
- Basic learning phase: acquiring the necessary resources to construct a Grade 1-2 reading lesson sequence:
  - Video reviews of reading lessons (to identify stages, duration, techniques, materials, etc.);
  - Comparison of the preparation of the presentation, comparison of preparation in the pre-reading guide, comparison of the programme guide;
  - Analysis of the video sequence (lesson);
- Integration/training phase: construction of a Grade 1-2 didactic reading sequence (while following the seven sessions of the student's book);
- Transfer Phase (during the course).

Furthermore, in two ENI, a 'Bilingual education' section exists, with the aim of responding to needs on the ground by offering five options: Hausa, Fulfulde, Zerma, Kanuri and Tamasheq. In addition to the above modules, the ST enrolled in this section are offered didactics courses in these national languages (at a rate of five hours per week). In addition to the CFEEN, the ST who do this module receive an official 'certificate' stating that they have completed this training.

Generally speaking, the reading training module proposed by the ENI indicates a willingness to move towards curricular alignment. However, there is a noticeable gap in the flow of information between the Ministry of Education and the ENI, as the guidelines of the new programme entitled *Programme d'études des Écoles Normales d'Instituteurs* (Teacher Training Colleges Study Programmes) (2008) are still based on implementing CBA, whereas the COC is now talking about APS. Worse, focus-group interviews (with supervisors at the Dosso ENI on the one hand, and the ST on the other) reveal that in several training sites the approach applied is that of pedagogy by objectives (PPO). Another observation concerns the training of ENI supervisors, which deserves to be given more importance if supervisors are to be better qualified to train ST.

Continuing training of primary teachers

According to an administrative logic, CT is organized into a series of units going from smallest to largest.

The smallest unit is the school, where continuing training takes place in what is called a 'Mini Pedagogical Activity Cell' (or Mini-CAPED). The Mini-CAPED is run by the school principal who must organize it regularly in order to set up a practical framework for the exchange of practices and peer-to-peer training in the school.

Above the school, there is the Educational Sector, run by an educational adviser. Given that there is a large number of schools per sector, they are divided into sub-groups around the best-located school in the sub-group. It is therefore around this grouping that CAPEDs should be organized (normally in the form of two five-day gatherings a year, run by the educational adviser). It is worth noting that a CAPED must not exceed 36 teachers and that educational advisers will also supervise teachers in the field. The feedback that follows these observation sessions also constitutes formal moments of individualized continuing education.

The next unit up is that of the Inspectorate, which is the educational unit that oversees several educational sectors. An inspectorate is headed by an inspector and his or her deputy. The established norm is to have one inspectorate for a maximum of 144 teachers. As advisers, inspectors also supervise teachers in the field.

Finally, above the inspectorate, there is the Regional Directorate, even though this unit does not intervene directly in the field. These regional directorates are run by regional directors who establish the regional education and training plans.

Regarding CT, one may tentatively draw up the following list of findings and questions:

- What justification is there for the lack of ENI supervisors? It seems important to involve them in this stage of the teachers' careers. As principals, advisers and inspectors are all responsible for evaluating teachers, the presence of ENI supervisors could help to strengthen the purely training aspect of CT (but which teachers sometimes struggle to perceive when faced with persons in charge of evaluating them).

- There would therefore seem to be a need to (re)build relationships between ENI supervisors and supervisors in the field (educational advisers and inspectors) to work in CT. In the opinion of the authors of this report, there is significant potential in such an approach, which would pool experiential knowledge and knowledge from research, but also harness the knowledge used in initial training by the ENI supervisors.

- Given that the CAPED already exist, would they not offer a perfect framework to facilitate the circulation of knowledge?

The accelerated training of primary teachers

Although this type of training has often been mentioned in the field, very little information about it is available. One must nevertheless point out that with generalized access to education and the explosion in the number of students since 1998-99, Niger has recruited a significant number of teachers with no initial training. To raise standards, some of these teachers, initially referred to as 'Education Volunteers' and 'Contract Teachers', have received accelerated training courses lasting 15 to 45 days (depending on funding and available resources) to instruct them in the basics of their profession.

For example, last year, funding from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation helped train 5,884 contract teachers (with no initial training) during the school holidays (30 to 45 days). The purpose of this short training course was to provide them with basic tools, derived from questions such as: What is a preparation book? How do you prepare a lesson?

SUPERVISOR TRAINING

As seen above, there are several types of supervisors involved in teacher training. The following section presents the essential aspects of their initial and continuing training (when information is available).

Principals

The principals are involved in the supervision of their co-workers and organize Mini-CAPED. However, no specific basic training is provided to prepare them for their responsibilities as principals. Therefore, they must learn their new role of educational supervisors by practising in the field. Ten years ago, an initiative funded by the African Development Fund (ADF) trained a large majority of the principals appointed at that time. The persons who have been appointed since then (including teachers with no initial training) have not received any specific training.

Educational Advisers

Advisers receive initial training at the École Normale Supérieure (hereinafter ENS). To be admitted, candidates must be primary school teachers with at least three years' professional experience and must pass the ENS entrance exam. The training lasts for two years, at the end of which students are awarded the educational adviser basic education diploma one.

School inspectors

School inspectors are trained at the ENS. Only educational advisers with three years' professional experience may apply. Admission is granted on a competition basis. The training lasts one year (soon to be two years).

ENI lecturers or supervisors

There are two supervisor profiles at the ENI: they can either be educational advisers or inspectors; or they can hold a Bachelor's degree in educational sciences or a Master's degree in language – French, linguistics, psychology, sociology or Arabic. Given that there is no training available for these supervisors, it is the Educational Units (hereinafter EU) within each ENI that act as the ultimate place of training, within the TU in which they operate.

By way of a brief conclusion to this section on the training of supervisors, two questions stand out:

• When consulting the training syllabi at the ENS for future supervisors in the field, it is apparent that the supervisors are not trained for bilingual education, although some of them will be called on to work in this context. How can their training adapt to enable them to work in this context different to that of traditional school?

• Why do ENI supervisors receive no training other than that which takes places within the EU?

KEY POINTS

1. Further reflection is surely required on ways of reinforcing the links advocated by the official instructions (e.g. between reading, language and writing) through the activities proposed in the reading textbooks and the teacher's guide. One has the impression that the current organization of the programme is not conducive to exploring this important dimension of the curricular requirements.

2. For activities in which students are asked to work on a 'sound', the seven sessions recommended by the teacher guide should encourage greater flexibility in the exercises. For example, given that the multilingual environment offers opportunities for comparison between the first and second language, there is scope to work on the learners' sensitivity to the tonal characteristics of certain local languages, when the sound being studied allows. Using this kind of roundabout method could help reinforce awareness of the difference between the phonological code of spoken language and the graphic code of written language.

3. In line with the findings of research, the official requirements advocate varying the texts that are used. In the opinion of the authors of this study, this aspect could be reinforced in the textbooks or even go further by encouraging varied reading materials that boost the initiation into the world of writing. As seen in Chapter 3, reading aloud should also play a key role. It appears that the place attributed to PLM, for obvious reasons, has relegated reading aloud to a secondary role.

4. The choice of texts and their purpose should be more explicitly stated in the textbooks and guides; similarly, teachers would benefit from being able to select their texts in terms of the objectives they set.

5. It appears that little space is set aside for learning to write in Grade 1 and Grade 2. This dimension should be reinforced. Similarly, it would be worth practising child-to-adult dictation in these initial levels. This not only facilitates the construction of a written culture, but also helps to facilitate the communicative approach advocated by the official texts.

6. With regard to teacher training, the lack of collaboration between the actors involved in the initial training and those responsible for continuing education needs to be examined.

7. Similarly, one should be mindful of avoiding the large gaps between the training bodies and those tasked with supervising student teachers in the field. Better collaboration in the training could in fact help eliminate these gaps that are often detrimental to future teachers.
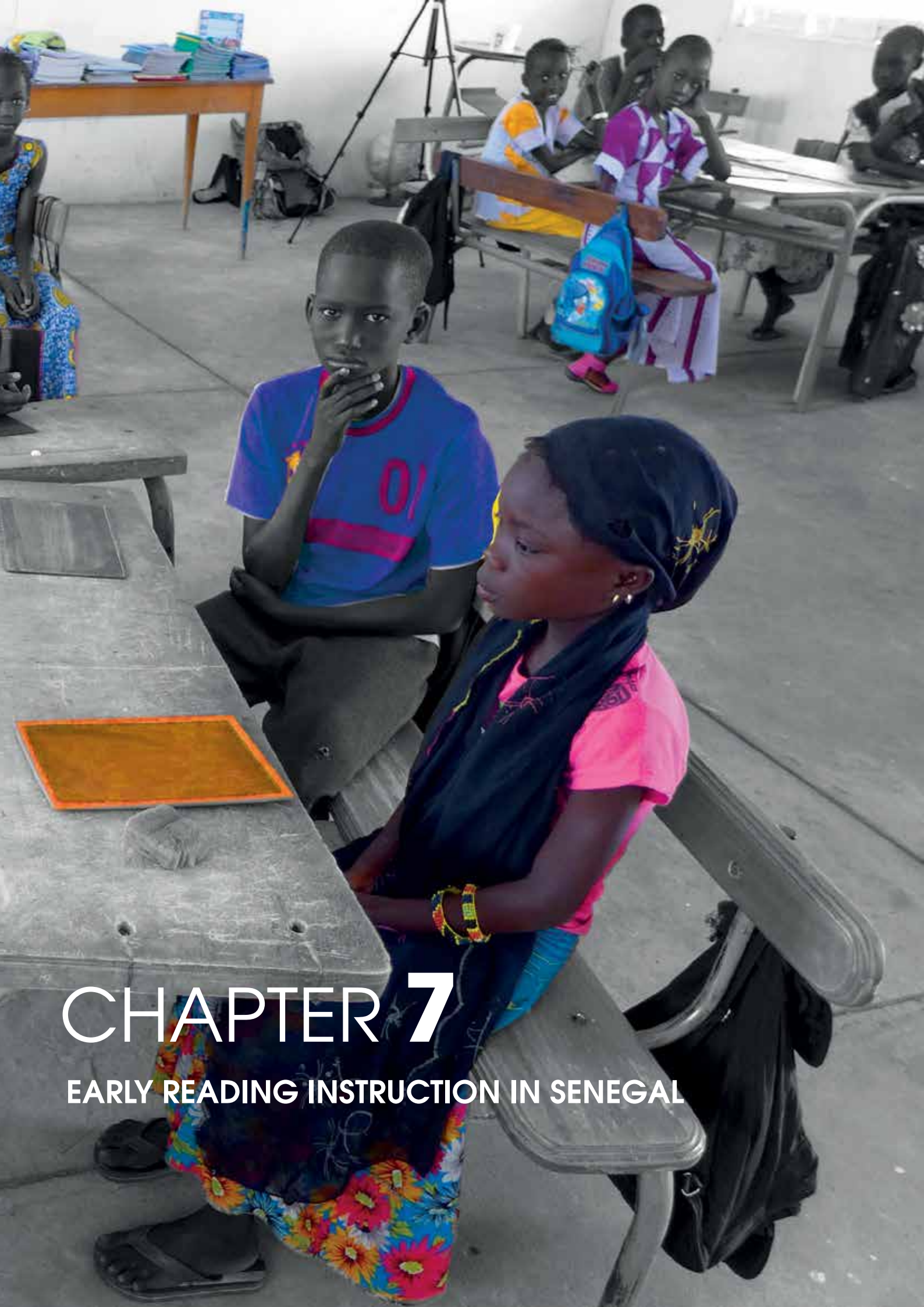
CHAPTER **7**

EARLY READING INSTRUCTION IN SENEGAL

The debate on education that took place in the aftermath of Senegal's political independence exerted a lasting influence on reading instruction. In this multilingual country, this debate has continued to polarize opinion right up to today, resulting in two contradictory positions regarding the choice of the language of instruction. It raises a number issues to do with the teaching of African culture and the development thereof, the appropriation of technical and scientific knowledge favourable to national development, and conceptions of modern schooling.

For L. Senghor and A. Sadji, the language of instruction in Senegal must be French and reading is considered to play a crucial role in the formation and moral edification of the citizen: 'The goal is to teach children French, that is to say, a rich and nuanced language that tends towards abstraction. At the same time, the teaching must be adapted to the African environment and the deep psychology of the black child' (1953, p. 5). This psychology has already been forged by 'the myths, legends, tales, fables, proverbs and riddles that fill black evenings' (p. 5), through 'stories already heard by children in their mother tongue and which they have already experienced' (p. 5).

Ch. Anta Diop takes a different view, arguing that to instil a 'modern' African mentality, the 'sole guarantee of adaptation to the technical world…it is more effective to develop a national language than to artificially cultivate a foreign language; providing instruction in a mother tongue would avoid years of delay in knowledge acquisition. A foreign language very often acts as a watertight seal that prevents our mind from accessing the content of the words that is reality. As a result, instead of developing thinking we cultivate the ability to memorize' (1979, p. 405).

In the 1970s, policymakers initially opted to maintain French as the language of instruction. Nonetheless, teaching in the spoken language was not totally abandoned. In the early 1980s, various projects experimented with different approaches to bilingual instruction, in particular in the early grades. These projects, which were supplemented by other educational projects run by various agencies, were part of an educational reform project encompassing the enrolment of all school-age children as well as adult literacy. They resulted in the Education Orientation Law no. 91-22 of 16 February 1991, which stipulates in Article 6 that:

> National education is Senegalese and African, developing the teaching of national languages as preferential tools to provide students a living contact with their culture and to ground them in their history; it forms Senegalese citizens who are aware of their identity and belonging.

Driven by the desire to improve the quality of education and student enrolment, both of boys and girls, the political and educational authorities added instruction in national languages – as well as the teaching of national languages – to the teaching of French as a second language; in the same movement, the teaching of Arabic was introduced into public schools or daaras[44] in 2005. The general education and training policy statement of the Republic of Senegal calls for:

> A strategic development of the school map that gives priority to rural areas and takes into account the demand for education, namely by setting up formal bilingual French-Arabic schools where people want them, or by introducing the teaching of Arabic into existing schools (*Lettre de politique générale pour le secteur de l'éducation et de la formation de la République du Sénégal*, 2005, p. 2).

....
44 - Daaras are Koranic schools.

CHAPTER 7

Over the course of these decades, various national curricula and multiple reading instruction approaches or methods have been developed and put into practice in the classroom. These efforts, supported by teacher training policy, have fostered the development of teaching practices rich in potential that merit closer examination.

In order to clearly define the principal orientations determining reading instruction in Senegal, the following section of this chapter will analyse different strata of the teaching system:

- The official syllabi;
- The reading instruction methods used in French as a second language and some of those piloted for teaching in national languages;
- The key aspects of the teacher training programme, particularly those concerning reading instruction.

Supplemented by the Chapter 10 review of Grade 1, Grade 2 and Grade 3 classroom teaching content in Senegal, this analysis will, first, identify the main components of reading that are taught and, second, track the progression of reading instruction over the first three years of primary education. Relevant features, professional resources and potential pitfalls will all be taken into consideration.

In light of the constant process of educational reform in Senegal, it makes sense to distinguish between three periods in order to study the various facets of reading instruction. The first period, from the 1960s up to the 1980s, sees a gradual stabilization of basic education in the Senegalese Republic, founded on the teaching of French as a second language. Influenced by second-language didactics, this teaching adopts a communicative perspective that places a strong emphasis on oral communication using audio-visual resources. This approach was abandoned in 1981 by the General Conference on Education and Training. The second period, initiated in the early 1980s and lasting until the turn of the 20th century, was marked by an important change of perspective: the teaching was re-centred on objectives; it promoted African authors and targeted both comprehension and the study of 'sounds'.

The third and current period emphasizes the acquisition of competencies, advocating a communication-centred approach and the study of different text types. This shift has prompted the rewriting of the curriculum, which is still ongoing today.

In the following section, the analyses of syllabi, teaching resources and teacher training is organized according to this undoubtedly simplified breakdown into three periods.

1. OFFICIAL INSTRUCTIONS AND SYLLABI FOR THE FIRST THREE YEARS OF READING INSTRUCTION IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

OFFICIAL INSTRUCTIONS AND SYLLABI FOR THE FIRST PERIOD (1960-1981).

The official instructions of 1972 were upgraded in 1978 (Ministry of Education, 19 January 1978). These documents are general in scope and therefore the analysis provided here will be brief. They were published following the development of a teaching method entitled *Pour parler français* (To Speak French; see report by A. N. Seck, *Description des méthodes de lecture en français du Sénégal* (Description of French reading methods in Senegal), submitted to the IBE in June 2014).

These official instructions are in line with the international movement to reform the teaching of French, both as a first and second language. This movement advocates a communicative approach that is living rather than artificial, prioritizing orality and the intuitive use of language (p. 3). Its aims are 'to determine the best way of teaching French as a means of communication, to avoid lexical labelling, because a word only has meaning within a set of words that is itself meaningful' (p. 3) and to 'naturally lead children to use structures and forms that they have not been trained to consciously recognize in grammar lessons' (p. 3).

The 1978 guidelines state that French is considered as a *working language* and that the initiation into French will take place in parallel to *the introduction of teaching in national languages*, with the aim of preserving the characteristics of African peoples through the genuine promotion of their culture. It is further indicated that the teaching of French will be based on the techniques used to teach modern languages. These statements confirm the status of French as a foreign, second language. However, the pedagogical effectiveness of methods used to teach French, based on the most proven techniques, along with the development of tools to facilitate the teaching of national languages point to a possible reversal of the official hierarchy: the techniques that have proven their efficiency in teaching French will favour the future teaching of national languages.

A clear progression can be observed in the pedagogical approach: the child must first learn to communicate, to practise oral and then written communication, before they can grasp language analytically. The study of language structure and exercises on grammatical points link the various lessons. Following a series of assessments, this approach was rejected: the assessors criticized the fact that students learned by reading aloud, memorizing and reciting texts to determine its comprehension.

OFFICIAL INSTRUCTIONS AND SYLLABI FOR THE SECOND PERIOD (1981-2000)

Having abandoned a pedagogy that gave precedence to the oral dimension, language teaching was reformed under the influence of an objectives-driven approach. The 1987 programme, probably designed for the programmes of pilot classes[45] (programmes and official instructions, Ministry of Education, 1987), introduced these new guidelines inspired by Bloom's taxonomy. This reform modifies the disciplinary configuration so that the discipline seems to present itself as a list of objectives. To understand words, sentences, images and text, nine priority objectives are listed for Grade 2, four of which concern mastery of the code:

- Discriminating between similar sounds;
- Mastering associated consonants;
- Correctly distinguishing the sounds *s*, *ç* and *c*;
- Identifying the signs *k*, *g* and *gn*;
- Mastering the meaning of keywords in a text;
- Putting a text together from related images
- Writing a caption to go with an image (word or sentence);
- Completing a sentence using the correct term;
- Associating words presented in written form with parts of a drawing (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 30).

45- As it was not possible to procure a copy of this document for this study, it has not been analysed. It is cited in the educational booklet published by the Ministry of Education (1996), *De l'analyse des curricula à l'identification des objectifs pédagogiques prioritaires en français et en mathématiques au cycle élémentaire* (From the Analysis of Curricula to the Identification of Priority Educational Objectives in French and Mathematics in Primary School), Livret pédagogique no. 1 (CP-CE-CM1), Dakar, Institut National d'étude et d'action pour le développement et l'éducation. The analysis of the 1996 curricula refers in particular to *Sidi et Rama*: Grade 2, Grade 3, Grade 4 and Grade 5.

In Grade 3, the reading skills that student must master are defined by thirteen objectives. Only one of these relates to the code, the others are to do with understanding words, drawings, writings or texts:

- Discriminating between words containing similar sounds (consonant clusters);
- Sorting images or sentences in chronological order;
- Completing a sentence with the correct term;
- Among a series of words, identifying those that belong to the same lexical field;
- In a given sentence, substituting one term with another;
- Assessing the accuracy of the information contained in a given sentence;
- Identifying objects in a drawing;
- For a given word or sentence, identifying its synonym or an expression with the same meaning;
- Among several sentences, identifying the one that matches a drawing;
- Answering questions about characters, actions, places and times;
- Among a selection of titles, identifying the one that matches the story;
- Among several sentences, identifying the final sentence missing from the text;
- Finding the word that replaces a personal subject pronoun in a text.

A clear progression can be observed between the Grade 2 and Grade 3 objectives. The distribution of the targeted components is certainly varied for both grades, encompassing knowledge of the code as well as the comprehension of words, sentences and texts. In Grade 2, the work on reconstructing texts from images and mastering keywords indicates that the goal is to achieve overall comprehension. In Grade 3, the teaching essentially focuses on language (substitutes, lexical field, synonymy) and clearly much less on the phonographic code. In reading comprehension, the goal remains to achieve an overall comprehension of the text (i.e. the questions are about characters, actions, places and times; choosing a title reflects an ability to understand the whole and identifying the final sentence demonstrates an understanding of the logic of the text). It should be noted that there is no reference to producing writing or texts.

THE SYLLABI FOR THE THIRD PERIOD (2000s TO THE PRESENT)

The syllabi for the third period have undergone a long development phase. They were initially tested to verify their relevance and feasibility in formal education and subsequently adapted based on the results of this pilot scheme. Gathered under the title of *Curriculum de l'éducation de base élémentaire, guide pédagogique* (Basic Primary Education Curriculum, Teacher's Guide) (Ministry of Education, 2008), these syllabi are broken down according to the three cycles of primary education (Grades 1-2, Grades 3-4, Grades 5-6) and include a detailed programme for the teaching of French. These documents are currently being updated, a revised version (2nd edition) was published in December 2013. This revised version was not distributed to teachers. Both versions contain a first part referred to as the 'theoretical framework', a second called the 'pedagogical framework' and a third part that presents the programme, clearly stating goals, proposed methods and activities, as well as sample assessments. These official documents are quite detailed and contain a range of educational information. A clear effort has been made to explain the requirements of the curriculum, surely with the intention of making up for the constantly criticized lack of teaching resources.

The development and publication of the *Curriculum de l'éducation de base* in 2008 (hereinafter CEB, 2008) certainly marked an important turning point. The document adopted the dual perspective of a combined curricular- and competency-based approach. The theoretical part, reproduced in the 2013 version, defines curriculum[46] and competency[47]. Competency is complex to master and is acquired gradually, through an incremental process. It is likened to advancing on 'an upward slope punctuated by tiers that are sometimes staggered in relation to each other and sometimes at the same level' (p. 11). Three categories of competency structure the programme: exit competencies (at the end of primary school), cycle exit competencies (a cycle corresponding to two grades) and basic competencies, interspersed through the grades in a series of tiers. This conception of progression through tiers and categories of competencies is intended to provide continuity while injecting increasing complexity into student achievements.

The programme is organized by disciplinary fields, which are themselves divided into sub-fields. For French, the disciplinary configuration is as follows: for the first cycle (Grade 1-Grade 2), the sub-fields are oral language or communication, reading with letters/sounds, written production and handwriting. The second cycle (Grade 3-Grade 4) contains the sub-fields of communication or oral expression, written communication, covering reading and the production of writing, and the study of language tools (vocabulary, grammar, conjugation, spelling and handwriting/writing). It should be noted that the variations between the 2008 and 2013 versions of the CEB are not very significant. The hierarchy of sub-fields is more precisely defined in 2013, with the study of language tools being subordinated to written communication (reading and written production).

In the 2013 CEB, the theoretical and practical framework (parts I and II) is much more detailed concerning integration, namely the learning process involved in integration situations[48]. The importance attributed to these situations has prompted a review of recommended procedures, focusing attention on reading instruction.

In the 2008 document, a strong link is made between the teaching of oral communication and reading instruction. Oral communication is taught from everyday communication situations with reference to *speaking activities*. It emphasizes French vocabulary, a corrective approach to phonetics exercises based on word repetition (CEB, 2008, Stage 1, p. 54) and the practice of various structural exercises[49] to appropriate the syntax of simple sentences.

46- 'The curriculum is a planned set of aims, objectives, content, teaching methods, textbooks, teacher training strategies and assessment procedures.' (CEB, 2008, section on context and justifications diagram integrated in s.i. page).

47- 'This approach emphasizes the pedagogy of integration, which enables students to mobilize the knowledge they have acquired to resolve a complex situation, just like in real life' (CEB, 2008, section on context and justifications, diagram integrated in s.i. page). 'A competency requires the student to mobilize his or her available resources; a competency has a purpose, a function or an associated social utility; a competency is linked to a specific family of situations; a competency can be evaluated (...); a competency is a complex reality. Integrating a competency requires the learner to master it progressively with a gradual increase in difficulty.' (CEB, 2008, p. 10).

48- A significant integration situation occurs as part of a planned and sequenced learning process; it results in a production; it favours the integration of knowledge, know-how and life skills, not merely their juxtaposition; it is complex in the sense that its resolution must mobilize more than one resource. This complexity requires students to make use of their own resources, drawing on those that are relevant and critical, integrating them to come up with a solution; it encompasses the components essential to its resolution but also negative elements; it involves earlier learning; it strictly relates to student achievements; it is significant, that is to say, it is meaningful for the student, both boy and girl, it is real and relates to their daily lives and interests; it is a challenge for students, motivating them to acquire new knowledge so as to gain access to resources enabling them to resolve this complexity; it is conducive to individual but also to group work (group work is one of the basic principles of social constructivism, which championed the competency-based approach) (CEB, 2013, p. 16, common theoretical framework for the teaching guides published by discipline).

49- Structural exercises are exercises based on substitution, transformation and expansion that allow students to systematize the use of structures and vocabulary found in the highlighted speaking activities (CEB, 2008, p. 90).

Reading comprehension is organized from a different unit: *the text type*. The communication situation and the communication intention are defined in relation to oral communication, certainly in reference to Jakobson's model (Who is speaking? To whom? Why? By what means and channel? How or with what code? About what subject? CEB, 2008, Stage 1, p. 48). The communication intention is 'what the speaker wants to obtain and what motivates his decision to address another person' (p. 48). The approach, which is intended to be functional, is structured by reading text types whose communication purpose varies.

Concerning reading instruction, the recommended approach is presented under two headings: 'Reading' and 'Mastering blending'. The 'Reading' section begins with exercises on a text. In an approach grounded in whole-language analysis and the prediction of meaning, students read the text silently to identify surface clues: the way text is presented in its medium, the presence of an illustration, the title, the author's name, known words, punctuation marks, the use of capital letters, numbers, dates or other significant units. Once the text has been fully read and the clues identified, students compare their findings in groups. They then re-read the text silently and work on 'total' comprehension (p. 74 and p. 78): the students' assumptions are checked, unknown words are explained and students are asked questions relating to literal information. Following these first four phases, there is a reflection on the text during which students give their opinion about it. The last step is to read the text aloud: first the teacher provides a model reading and then the students read. The read-aloud is based on the clues highlighted in the text and the comprehension that has been constructed. This exercise works on reading fluency, focusing on clear articulation and pronunciation, with good intonation and vocal modulation.

In Grade 3, the approach is largely identical. After an initial silent reading of the text, the search for clues contributes to general comprehension. This comprehension serves to reveal the theme of the text and to identify the type or genre to which it can be attributed.

The 'Mastering blending' section, which is restricted to the first stage of the primary cycle, also works in different phases. The same text is used as a teaching aid. The teacher highlights a *key sentence* containing the letter/sound to be studied. The method is essentially guided by a graphophonemic approach of the syllabic type. The key sentence is used to extract the word that features the letters making the sound; this word is then divided into syllables and the sound under study is isolated. Its different spellings are displayed and written out. Then, as an auditory recognition exercise, students are asked to find words containing the 'sound'. For visual recognition, the words are written out and the target sound is systematically highlighted by drawing a circle around it. The letter/sound is systematically associated with vowels to form syllables. When the exercise on syllabic blending[50] is finished, the syllables are then used to form words through syllable associations.

The different lessons end with written production exercises to integrate the knowledge learned and various skills practised. For example, stories, descriptions or instructions are invented orally and dictated to the teacher[51] or the student writes a few sentences to recount an event, describe an object or to set rules for behaviour.

50- The term used in the official requirements is 'syllabic formation', however, the term blending better reflects the activity students are required to perform.

51- Student-to-adult dictation is defined as a situation that enables pre-readers/writers to develop a story orally, to orally enunciate a narrative likely to be written and to discover the functions of writing. Teachers are also encouraged to re-read the written version and to make changes if necessary (CEB 2008, Stage 1, p. 91).

In Grade 3, blending exercises are no longer recommended. Language knowledge focuses on spelling, grammar and vocabulary; these tools are used to develop written production, to which they are cognitively integrated.

The 2013 syllabus maintains the overall tier-based structure and the same approaches. However, it introduces significant changes by placing a greater emphasis on reading instruction. The new guidelines define comprehension as follows: comprehending a text means forming a cohesive mental representation of the text by combining the explicit and implicit information it contains with one's personal knowledge of the subject. This mental representation of the text is dynamic: it changes and becomes more complex in the course of reading, which requires attention and a significant cognitive effort (CEB, 2013, Stage 2, p. 50).

As recommended in 2008, reading instruction is based on two modules: reading comprehension and decoding. In 2013, these modules are structured differently. Reading comprehension is defined in relation to five reading components, the last of which incorporates all the others:

1- *Mastering the alphabetical code governing* the written language. This depends on phonemic awareness, the alphabetic principle and proficiency in graphophonological correspondences.
2- *Vocabulary development*. This is essential to comprehension and all communication.
3- *Word identification* through the development of the instant orthographic recognition of language units.
4- *Text comprehension* by working on different clues and integrating information in relation to the reader's knowledge through regular exposure to different types of text.
5- *Reading fluency* by integrating all the skills built up in the previous components (CEB, 2013, Stage 1, p. 15).

Following this general presentation of the disciplinary configuration, the pedagogical conceptions and the approaches advocated for reading instruction, the next section will analyse the syllabi of the third period in terms of how the teaching addresses the development of written culture, the comprehension and production of texts, and the mastering of the code. The progression of reading instruction from Grade 1 to Grade 3, as well as the way in which the students' multilingualism is taken into account will also be discussed. These different perspectives will provide a clear picture of the core teaching content.

The reference to written culture

In line with previous curricular requirements, both the 2008 and 2013 CEB adhere to the communicative approach and insist on the teaching of oral communication in French. This method is centred on speaking activities in the first months of Grade 1. It should be noted that there is no reference to more formal types of oral communication (i.e. TV interview, news programme, sports commentary, etc.) that could contribute to the progression of oral learning. Nor do the official documents comment on the difficulties involved in learning to read in a second written language. The experience of the students' spoken language is essentially oral and French is presented as a school language. Likewise, the syllabi do not mention the need to develop an awareness of written culture. Yet there is a significant difference between what students master in their national language(s), acquired in everyday contexts, and the initiation into writing in a second language, acquired at school. Finally, at this level of the curricular instructions, there is no sign of any incentives to develop school libraries and to provide students with varied reading materials.

The 2013 syllabus does announce one significant change, initially limited to Grade 1: students must be familiarized with the world of writing. The teacher introduces them to how a book is organized, its cover and the succession of pages. The world of writing nonetheless remains centred on the writing system and the general characteristics and conventions of writing. These dimensions address the code in a broad sense: the direction of reading in French, from left to right and from top to bottom, the spaces between words, the permanence of writing and the linearity of words that transcribe oral language. This familiarization process must be seen in light of the fact that most students simultaneously undergo schooling in classical Arabic, in which the direction of the writing is different, whose script differs from the Roman alphabet and where writing relates specifically to religious instruction.

The teaching of reading comprehension

Regarding the 2008 syllabus. The official requirements are constantly mindful of the fact that students should understand a variety of writing types. In Grade 1, after several weeks of initiation into French language with the aim of equipping students with a basic vocabulary and syntactic structures, reading instruction is organized from short texts, varied types of narrative texts (accounts, stories and comic strips), descriptions (places, objects, portraits) and injunctive texts (a series of instructions, manufacturing instructions for an object). In Grade 2, the same text types feature, complemented by informational texts (reading a note to respond to a request, reading a poster or an invitation card). In Grade 3, the narrative, descriptive and informational texts all feature again. Poetic texts are also added during this grade.

First, students work on the comprehension of short texts that are then to be read aloud, which is considered to provide an initial indicator of understanding. Injunctive texts serve to demonstrate comprehension through action, again through the exercise of reading aloud. In Grade 2, students must prove their ability to extract the general idea of the text (depending on the type of text, the student must explain the main information it contains, the different steps in a story or perform the requested task). The student must also be able to provide information about the content of the text. The third learning goal is to read aloud in a situation of real communication (CEB, 2008, Stage 1, p. 65)[52]. At the end of the first cycle, after two years of schooling in French, a student must be able to read the following poster, after the context is established.

Minielle a marché pendant longtemps pour trouver le lieu où doit se dérouler la kermesse. Elle s'est perdue car les rues du quartier se ressemblent. Elle a peur de demander son chemin, car sa mère lui interdit de parler à des personnes inconnues. Elle marche… Elle marche… Quelquefois, elle revient sur ses pas. Sa montre indique 16h30. Tout à coup, une affiche ! Elle s'approche et lit :

Grande kermesse de l'ASC « Entente ».

Le 23 mai 2006 à partir de 17 heures au Foyer des Jeunes.

De nombreux lots à gagner !

Ne vous le faites pas raconter !

Prix des billets :

- Adultes 500 F.

- Enfants 200 F.

Après la Mairie, tourner à gauche[53].

52- The quality of the read-aloud is assessed in relation to intonation, punctuation, articulation and speed.

53- Minielle walked for a long time to find the place where the bazaar is supposed to take place. She got lost because the streets in the neighbourhood all look the same. She is afraid to ask for directions because her mother told her not to talk to strangers. She walks… and walks… Sometimes she retraces her steps. Her watch says 4.30. Suddenly she sees a poster! She goes up to it and reads: *The ASC 'Entente' is holding its big bazaar/ from 5.00 pm on 23 May 2006 at the Youth Centre/Lots of prizes to be won!/Don't miss out on the fun!/Ticket prices:/adults 500 francs/children 200 francs/ After the Town Hall, turn left.*

Questions follow the 'poster': the student is asked to find the information that says where Minielle is to go, place the sentences stating what Minielle did in the right order, answer yes/no questions and cross out the incorrect information in the sentences. Students must also read the text aloud.

In Grade 3, students are given the following sample poster to read and analyse (CEB, 2008, Stage 2, p. 85).

« **KANGOURANG PRODUCTIONS** » VOUS OFFRE UN BEAU CADEAU DE NOEL :
HERCULE VS **BOMBARDIER**

(Illustration : deux mastodontes en tenue de lutteur)
Le choc des titans !!!
Une seule date à retenir

Vendredi 25 décembre 2006
18 heures précises au stade *Mare Diouf*

Un rendez-vous à ne pas manquer.

Homme: 1000 F
Enfant: 500 F[54]

The sample for Grade 3 contains more clues in the punctuation; there is a higher number of specific signs identifying the text. The comprehension questions relate to the location of the event, the date, the time and ticket prices. The explicit factual information highlighted by the questions ignores the thematic content and the lexical or syntactic clues found in the invitation to go to the wrestling match.

For the *narrative text*, also in Grade 3, the student must explain the general idea of the text (i.e. summarise it), indicate the chronology of events, the starting point or initial situation, the development or obstacles and state the end or final situation. Temporal and logical connectors, as well as verb tenses are identified. There is also work on reading aloud. The end of a teaching sequence is marked by the production of a story.

Once the general idea of the *descriptive text* has been clarified, its characteristics are analysed: adjectives, spatial connectors, comparatives, presentatives, etc. This knowledge will be applied in the production of a portrait, for instance, and may be assessed. The *injunctive text* is approached in the same way, however the aim of 'having someone perform an action' is explicitly emphasized.

54- 'KANGOURANG PRODUCTIONS' OFFERS YOU A SUPER CHRISTMAS PRESENT: HERCULE VS BOMBARDIER: (Illustration: two behemoths in wrestler outfits)/Clash of the titans!!!/Remember this date:/Friday 25 December 2006/ 6.00 pm sharp at the Marie Diouf stadium/Not to be missed/Adult: 1000 francs/Children: 500 francs.

The comprehension of each text type is verified by testing various abilities. Comprehension is not concerned solely with the general understanding of information[55].

The 2013 syllabus keeps the reference to text types and maintains the yearly organization by types, except for Grade 1, for which it prefers to speak of short texts. For Grade 2, the informational texts are abandoned and not reintroduced until Grade 4. However, text comprehension changes significantly: there is a reference to collecting the information contained in the text (literal comprehension), but also an appeal to students' ability to infer by linking pieces of information from the text and relating them to personal knowledge. The reader becomes more active, tasked with a project and involved in creating meaning. Critical comprehension then builds on inferential comprehension: the student must be able to appreciate the text on the basis of his or her personal knowledge. Reading fluency is also a sign of comprehension: the precise reading of words and their pronunciation indicates that their meaning has been identified; the speed and expressiveness of reading are also signs of the construction of meaning. The authors of the CEB point out that fluency 'participates in reading comprehension because it is necessary to read fluently in order to concentrate on the meaning of the text' (2013, Stage 2, p. 46).

From Grade 1 and all through the first cycle, students must demonstrate their understanding of short texts read by the teacher and themselves by identifying the main idea, reformulating the content in their own words, summarizing the essential points and giving their opinion.

The reader is asked to draw upon reading strategies and to control comprehension while reading. In this context a reading strategy is defined as:

> A means or combination of means that the reader implements consciously in order to understand a text. A strategic reader is active and constantly asks questions: *'What is the story about?*
> *What does this person, this object, this place look like? What has happened so far? What have I learned in this text?'* Good readers plan their reading. They check to make sure it is advancing smoothly. If they encounter a problem along the way, they are able to recognize that there has been a loss of comprehension and they choose the best adapted means of recuperating the meaning of the text
> (CEB, 2013, Stage 2, p. 46).

In the disciplinary configuration of French structuring the second generation of syllabi, text production activities play a role in integrating the knowledge acquired by students and enable them to exercise a 'competency' that demonstrates their learning achievements. As written production is inseparable from the teaching of written communication, it must also be addressed in the framework of this study.

55- For the *narrative text*, the ability to give a new title or a title to each paragraph, to identify the superstructure of the text, to name the characters, to indicate the location and circumstances of the actions or events, to situate the order of events on a time scale, to finish a story, to summarize or to make a judgment. *The comprehension of the descriptive text* is verified through questions relating to its overall appearance, to the characters or places, to the identification of different parts of the text, to the ability to represent what is described in another form or to give one's impression of the text. *The reading of the informational text* is evaluated on the basis of asking the students to identify information or on their ability to connect pieces of information or reformulate them. The ability to establish a list of equipment, to place the different actions to be executed in the right order, to list instructions to make a recipe properly, to perform a textbook task or game, to spot information provided through an illustration or to perform a required action are used to verify the comprehension of the *injunctive text*. The poetic text is approached through its pattern, structure, rhyme or rhythm, but also through the student's ability to read or recite it aloud or to illustrate it.

Written production

The 2008 syllabus foresees that from Grade 1, and already for the first tier, students should start writing a few sentences to relate a fact, to describe an object or to give instructions. Child-to-adult dictation is the recommended writing exercise. In Grade 2, the student is expected to write more independently, producing little stories, descriptions of actions, animals or recommendations for action. The knowledge acquired through reading narrative, descriptive and injunctive texts is put to use. For Grade 3, students are expected to produce narrative, descriptive, injunctive and poetic texts, as well as letters and posters. Revision work and text reading exercises are prescribed: students must produce a first draft according to certain criteria, evaluate this first draft, rewrite the text and then read aloud a text produced by another student.

It should be pointed out that the instructions define plausible communication situations, modelled on the text types: 'In your activity book, there are pictures but what happened has not been written down. And your little brother doesn't understand. Look at the pictures and write two sentences to explain what is happening' (CEB, 2008, Grade 1, p. 81). Or: 'Your uncle has lost the ram in this photo (or drawing). Describe the ram in four sentences to make a poster to help find it' (CEB, 2008, Grade 2, p. 88). At the start of Grade 3, the proposed writing situation is as follows: 'The school has created a newspaper. Your class has been chosen to write inte-resting stories. Choose a narrative text (story or other). Read it aloud to your classmates and summarize it in a few words. Then write a text for the class' (CEB, 2008, Grade 3, p. 45). Other situations such as having the student write a response letter from a given model letter in place of his or her mother, or producing a poster for a school bazaar are also recommended.

In the 2013 syllabus, the integration situations (see above, in particular footnote 48) focus on reading; those concerning the production of text are not as listed. For the first stage, the syllabus states that the *production of texts* is based on a writing project in which you have something to communicate to someone. Students must think about what they are writing, how they will organize it and then choose what words to use. Of course, at first, the child is not able to write an entire text, but asking him or her to add a few words or to finish a sentence is already placing him or her in the process of producing a text (CEB 2013, p. 14). In Grade 1 and Grade 2, the aim is to produce sentences that match communication situations. At the start of the year, the proposed situation is adapted to the speaking activities the students work on in oral communication. The instructions are as follows:

> On the board, there are three comic book panels: a first panel shows a person greeting another person; a second panel shows a person introducing someone else; a third shows a person saying goodbye. *Choose labels to write what the characters are saying in the pictures*
> (CEB, 2013, Grade 1, p. 68).

In Grade 2, the situation is strongly linked to text types. The example concerns the injunctive text.

> You are in charge of a task at home or at school (washing the sheep... locking the classroom...), you have to leave and you ask your brother/sister to replace you. *Write at least two sentences to tell him or her what to do*
> (CEB, 2013, Grade 2, p. 76).

In Grade 3, the syllabus requires the students to practice writing narrative, descriptive and injunctive texts by integrating the knowledge they have acquired about language. The example below concerns the narrative text. The following writing situation is proposed for the first tier. 'Your little brother found this comic without words. You decide to write the story to help him understand road safety. *Write the story corresponding to the following images.*

Figure 7.1: CEB, 2013, Grade 3, p. 62

From 2008 to 2013, there is a noticeable shift from written production in favour of reading instruction. The difficulties students have experienced in writing, with regard to developing and expressing content in French, certainly have something to do with this change. The situations proposed in the 2013 documents are closer to the oral language learned at the beginning of Grade 1. It is also worth noting that child-to-adult dictation remains recommended, but no example is provided through a production situation. Overall, students are expected to produce shorter texts. The writing to be produced derives less from a communicative perspective. The framing of communication situations tends to be briefer, making the aim of the text to be produced less explicit.

Teaching the code

During the first nine weeks of school (tier 1, Grade 1), the 2008 syllabus adopts a whole-language approach to reading. Students memorize and recognize words from their everyday lives. From the second tier, key sentences drawn from the texts are used to identify phonemes and graphemes. Students systematically work on syllabic blending as soon as they learn the first consonants (/t/, /l/). In Grade 2, the teaching focuses on more complex phonograms presenting spelling difficulties (/s/or/ʒ/), consonant clusters (tr, pr or fl, gl), letter sequences (ette, hile) and so on.

In Grade 3, students no longer learn through the blending and graphophonemic system. The focus is placed on the essential tools of written production: through spelling, conjugation, grammar and vocabulary, students practise the use of appropriate words (e.g. logical and temporal connectors), become familiar with dictionary use, learn silent final letters or how to apply the agreement of subject and verb.

The 2013 syllabus documents present a different model for word deciphering and recognition, based on knowledge of letters and phonological awareness, as well as on morphological and orthographic knowledge. In Grade 1, a whole-language approach is still recommended, the aim being for students to acquire frequent words. However, from the start of reading instruction, it is complemented with other exercises: identifying the phonetic components of language and learning the letters of the alphabet while associating them with a 'sound'. Working with nursery

rhymes and counting rhymes, students are required to identify rhyming words, to chant syllables and to count them in a word; they will be asked to locate a 'sound' at the beginning, middle or end of a word, or to remove or add a syllable or 'sound'. In the second tier, from the eleventh week of school, students start working on graphophonological correspondences from a key sentence, in accordance with the approach advocated in the 2008 basic education curriculum.

The 2013 basic education curriculum stresses blending skills, but also emphasizes knowledge of words with a view to fostering recognition of their spelling. This knowledge focuses on word categories, but also, from Grade 1, on the lexical field and the most common affixes.

This syllabus recognizes that students entering the second cycle of primary education may be struggling to decipher words. There is a need to go back and work on these skills to ensure that students continue to progress steadily.

The progression of reading instruction

With regard to the place of reading instruction throughout the first cycle of the 2008 syllabus, it is difficult to identify a progression in terms of the comprehension of texts (whether oral or written), as the emphasis is placed on learning to decipher French words. In Grade 3, narrative, descriptive, injunctive, and informational texts feature again, with the noticeable addition of poetic texts. One can assume that students now know more French vocabulary and are capable of reading the set texts on their own, although still under the guidance of the teacher. In addition, according to the syllabus designers, a better typological knowledge of the texts should facilitate comprehension.

It should be pointed out that the progression is slower in the 2013 syllabus: in Grade 1, students read short texts; in Grade 2, they work on narrative, descriptive and injunctive texts. It is not until the second cycle that informational and dialogue-based texts are taught. This progression, which seeks to avoid some redundancies (introducing informational texts in Grade 2 and then repeating them in Grade 3) is more demanding on reading comprehension. Comprehension is no longer simply literal, but inferential, critical, regulated and controlled by the reader. Students also acquire a broader knowledge about words (in terms of the spelling, meaning and morphological composition).

Where the code is concerned, the first basic education curriculum (CEB, 2008) encompasses the teaching of monographs and the first digraphs (/u/, /ɛ/ or trigraphs formed with /o/). In Grade 2, students practise and learn more complex graphemes. In Grade 3, the lessons focus on the functional tools of the language (agreement rules for gender and number, writing homophones, the noun group and its associated elements). From 2013, the phonological analysis of words supplements the learning of letters and blending, which remains unchanged.

Reading instruction follows a progression in line with the conventional learning model of reading that spreads learning over two phases: first the technical phase of deciphering, second the autonomous comprehension of written texts.

CHAPTER 7 ....

The factor of multilingualism

In the 2008 CEB as in that of 2013, there is no explicit reference to the students' spoken language. One would have expected to find a commentary on the difficulties of teaching phonemes that do not exist in the language the students speak. For the intended users of the syllabi, this information is probably very familiar and therefore superfluous. These difficulties are certainly addressed in the phases of 'corrective and preventive phonetics' included in the section on oral communication.

The focus on vocabulary and syntax as well as on the pronunciation of French (speaking words or reading texts aloud) certainly reflects an implicit consideration for the fact that Senegalese students are immersed in learning a second language. However, the challenges specific to learning to read in a second language cannot remain implicit.

FINDINGS OF THE ANALYSIS OF THE SYLLABI

The analysis brings to light the following points:

1- A statement stands out from the first generation of syllabi: the pedagogical effectiveness of methods used to teach French, based on the most proven techniques, along with the development of tools to facilitate the teaching of national languages, points to a possible reversal of the official hierarchy: the techniques that have proven their efficiency in teaching French will favour the future teaching of national languages.

2- The students' multilingualism is considered from the point of view of the assertion that French is taught as a second language. The emphasis placed on speaking activities, and structural exercises clearly has to make up for the fact that very few students speak French when they start school.

3- The attention paid to preventive and corrective phonetics and to reading aloud can be seen as a response to the difficulty of learning French in the school context. Read-alouds by the teacher provide reading models for the students. Reading aloud also introduces them to different text types and genres, and serves as a medium to build a written culture, provided these texts are communicated in such a way as they can be understood (comments, developing connections, etc.).

4- The fact that one or several national languages are essentially practised orally impacts the relationship students can build with writing and written culture. It is entirely up to the school to foster knowledge of written media and genres of oral and written texts. This reality is taken into account through the textual typology. Knowledge of text types enables students to identify different communicative intentions. It also contributes to building a written culture provided teachers enable students to perceive these intentions.

5- Learning classical Arabic introduces students to a written culture that contrasts with French. The graphic signs, the direction of reading and the relationship to writing all differ. This additional learning experience has an impact on the 2013 syllabus, which draws attention to these dimensions.

6- In light of the above-mentioned issues, the constraints and difficulties involved in learning a second language are taken into account. However, those specific to the teaching and learning of reading in a second language are not mentioned in the requirements.

7- Regarding the teaching of French, in the third-generation syllabi, oral communication is learned through speaking activities. The teaching of written communication is structured from a textual typology. These two approaches do not operate according to the same logic. Inevitably there are differences between the work on speaking activities and the texts assigned for reading. The progression of learning consequently suffers from a lack of continuity, if not to say a discontinuity. Within this context, oral culture is presented as being different to written culture.

8- From Grade 1, reading instruction is organized from a situation that is meaningful for students, a situation that they can understand, grounded in a text or in everyday life. The mastery of the code is based on a sentence whose components are isolated up to the identification of a letter/sound. Students practise syllabic blending and syllabic combination. Here, one can recognize the classic mixed method that starts with a whole-language approach. It works on the word, the syllable and the phonogram. The approach is essentially graphophonemic. Phonemic analysis is recommended in the 2013 syllabus, but the graphophonemic approach still seems to dominate throughout the first cycle and at the beginning of the second cycle.

9- The model of initial reading instruction differs between the 2008 and 2013 syllabi. In the 2008 syllabus, words are identified in two ways: through phonological mediation, to decipher them (indirect route), and through orthographic recognition (direct route). In this model the instruction prioritizes the phonological dimension, meaning that students learn about spelling and the morphological components at a later stage. In 2013, the approach is based on dealing with logographic, phonographic and morphographic components all at the same time. Some of these components are predominant in the early stages of the initiation into writing, while others come to the fore at a later point in the learning process. The component-based model encourages teachers to jointly address the phonographic and morphographic components of text.

10- Instruction is often organized by themes with educational and moral aims. This orientation runs the risk of diminishing the language teaching aims.

KEY POINTS

1.   The progression between oral and written communication is not necessarily guaranteed (two approaches are employed and not immediately compatible: for oral communication, that of speaking activities and for writing an approach based on text types or genres).

2.   In the 2008 CEB, a clear shift occurs in the progression in Grade 3: students are assumed to have acquired decoding and writing is approached through knowledge of the functional tools of language (in terms of spelling, grammar and conjugation). A continuity is established in this approach between the middle cycle (Grade 3 and Grade 4) and the final primary cycle (Grade 5 and Grade 6) but it marks somewhat of a break with the first cycle (Grade 1 and Grade 2). The 2013 syllabus does not call for any change in relation to this shift.

3.   The 2013 curriculum proposes a slower progression in the reading and writing of texts: students start by reading and producing short texts. From Grade 2, they begin reading different text types. This recent choice can be considered as pertinent due to two factors: it favours the development of a written culture, in particular through structured teacher led read-alouds of different text types, and it produces different text genres through the *child-to-adult dictation* method of text production.

4.   The wording of the 2008 syllabi suggests that the intention of the texts is perceived through knowledge of the language units. Thanks to precise knowledge of words and sentences, the reader is supposed to grasp what the author of the text intended to express. There is a brief explanation of 'communication intentions': recounting something; informing, encouraging, inviting, asking; giving instructions or orders to perform an action; describing, showing, presenting (CEB, 2008, Stage 2, p. 56). However, except for an analytical table and the inclusion of the production activity in a writing project whose intention is generally reflected in the instructions, no further explanation is provided for these elements of the text. Without explicit instruction, students must infer the intention from the integrated situations. It should be pointed out that the comprehension questions students are asked sometimes target the typological specificity of the texts. Five years later, in 2013, the approach to reading is guided more by the inferential model of information processing, which is characterized by a greater indifference to text typologies. The focus is on regulating and controlling the discovery of the meaning of the text by a strategic reader. This recent choice is based on the assumption that understanding a text essentially involves cross-cutting processes. This hypothesis has been invalidated by recent research.

5. The aim of the comprehension questions asked of students is to construct a reference. Most of the questions are literal, with the answers found in the text. From 2013, comprehension expands to inferential and critical reading. However, one may note that students do not have to justify their answers, nor are explanations required for questions on inferences or unmentioned elements. One may conclude that a more distanced position calling for students to justify their opinions is not systematically required. Students are certainly asked to make judgments and give opinions in connection with the texts, however these appraisals and opinions seem to focus on the normative dimensions of reading, or of the texts read and produced. These appraisals and opinions can also concern correct behaviour and moral edification.

6. In the third-generation syllabi, there is a reference to a theory of reading fluency that incorporates various components of reading. Fluency (*fluidité*) is considered to be quick, precise and expressive reading, and is dependent on visual span (CEB, Stage 1, 2013), a controversial concept today. It is claimed that this span can be expanded through exercises to make reading quicker and more efficient. Where the second cycle is concerned, the syllabus associates fluency more specifically with *fluence* (CEB, 2013, p. 46). The latter is defined as the ability to read accurately and quickly. It is verified by reading aloud. It differs from expressive reading, where the purpose is to communicate the text to listeners (p. 46). It should be pointed out that reading fluency is considered to be an indicator of comprehension. However, it may only be a condition of comprehension.

7. The purpose and place of reading aloud and of silent reading seem to be in contradiction. Placing the students in reading situations supposes that they are being presented with texts whose meaning they discover by themselves. Although the purpose of the reading exercise is explained by the teacher, this is a complex situation in which to place students who do not know French well. A read-aloud by the teacher cannot take the place of silent reading. There is a need to work with shorter, simpler texts conducive to independent reading by the students during early reading instruction.

8. Nonetheless, these simple texts will not suffice to build a written culture. There would seem to be a need to introduce other, more complex texts and text genres closer to the social practices of reading and writing in order to build a written culture.

9. The lesser emphasis on reading activities, in comparison with writing activities that can be observed in the 2008 syllabus and the shift in favour of reading activities introduced in the 2013 syllabus may have a bearing on the articulated construction of reading and writing skills expected of students today.

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2. READING INSTRUCTION MATERIALS IN THE FIRST THREE YEARS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL

The following section analyses the materials used in Senegal for the teaching of French as a second language and for teaching in national languages. The same criteria used to analyse the syllabi are applied in this section. The educational materials used in French were developed concurrently to the three generations of published syllabi. The materials designed for the teaching of national languages are more recent.

EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS FOR FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE IN THE FIRST PERIOD

Pour parler français (To Speak French) was developed by a Senegalese and French team. Seck's report (July 2014) states that this textbook is an adaptation of the structural-whole language audiovisual method. It contains texts to read and exercises linked to areas of interest.

> This method aims to teach language as a means of communication. Although the four skills of *listening, speaking, reading* and *writing* are presented in the method, it should be noted that the text for reading only appears near the end of the learning sequence. Students practise reading by working on rhythm and intonation while marking pauses, liaisons, stress, etc. Here, the accurate imitation of intonation and rhythm is treated with at least equal importance as understanding the message.
>
> Clearly, writing is somewhat sacrificed to the benefit of spoken language, that is to say, elocution and more particularly pronunciation, which is essential in the study of a foreign language' (Seck, a, 2014, p. 2).

The main orientations of *Pour parler français* are as follows: oral language is given precedence, with at least one term being set aside for preliminary initiation into oral language, before any reading instruction; lessons are based on audiovisual materials that present lively dialogues, related to familiar situations. Phonetic and grammatical difficulties are taught from a programme based on comparative studies between French and the main languages of Senegal, drawing on structural linguistics. The method is designed for the different grades of primary school and is enriched with audiovisual tools including a school radio and materials to present communication situations (figurines, white board, facial expressions and gesture). In addition, each teacher has a methodological guide that enables him or her to make full use of the collection of student reading manuals from Grade 1 to Grade 6.

Thus, from Grade 1 to Grade 4, radio was used for a minimum of 30 minutes a day in a synchronized manner across the national territory to present or set a linguistic sample pronounced in proper French accents. It was also used for reading in Grade 3 and Grade 4 but was quickly abandoned in light of complaints from users and the trade unions.

THE MATERIALS OF THE SECOND PERIOD

Je lis et j'écris is a textbook developed for the first two grades of primary school. The learning unit is structured according to the principles of the mixed method with a whole-language approach. One should keep in mind that the approach taken at this moment was maintained up to the third period for the development of teaching materials. As described by Seck, the approach functioned as follows:

> The sequence begins with the setting of a context to produce the sentence of study or a small text serving as a corpus and containing the key sentence. The analysis phase goes from key sentence to key words and syllables and from there to the key sound. The isolation of the key sound is followed by syllabic blending and association activities. The words formed during these activities will be read and used to form sentences and a short text that will be read on the board before doing reading in the textbooks (Seck, 2014a, p. 4).

The higher classes can use the *Afrique mon Afrique* (Africa my Africa) collection. French speakers are no longer used as the standard reference and fresh emphasis is placed on the *African story*, told by African and Caribbean writers, or by foreigners who have been living on the continent for a long time. These textbooks reflect the African's viewpoint on the world.

The 1986 guidelines were revised in 1990. The new methodological guidelines led to the development of *Sidi et Rama* (Sidi and Rama). The *Sidi et Rama* collection is published by the National Institute of Study and Action for Educational Development (INEADE, Institut National d'Étude et d'action pour le Développement de l'Éducation). The textbooks making up the collection are replicas of a dominant model in francophone Africa, the single French textbook, which, unlike the old heavy and complex methodological sets (illustrated materials, tape recordings, exercise books, anthologies) is a single book broken into teaching units (texts to be read, exercises and recreational pages) that at the same time define a course of study and propose activities.

It should be noted that along with public schools, private Catholic schools use the collection *Ami et Rémi* (Ami and Rémi) in which the textbooks designed for the first two grades are based on the syllabic method of the Davesne series.

Sidi et Rama is still available in classrooms. It can still be considered as an important resource, which continues to be used by teachers today for lack of other teaching materials. This resource deserves a more detailed analysis.

Sidi et Rama

This collection concerns Grade 1, Grade 2, Grade 3, Grade 4, Grade 5 and Grade 6, i.e. all primary school grades. As it was possible to consult only the textbooks used in Grade 1 and Grade 3, the analysis will be restricted to these two grades.

Students' culture as a means of entering the world of writing

The foreword to the Grade 1 textbook states that its underlying 'methodological options… participate in the principle that reading is above all about discovering meaning, and that this meaning is only found in texts (not in sounds, syllables or isolated words)' (Ministry of Education, 1990/2003, p. 3). The textbook stresses an importance of the meaning of texts from when students first start learning to read.

According to the authors, the discovery of the meaning of texts seeks to foster awareness in students that 'the goal of reading is less about deciphering than appropriating the message' (p. 3). The texts are based on themes close to the students' experiences, fostering 'a genuine connection with the child, who is constantly prompted to refer to his or her daily life' (p. 3). This diversity of themes is supposed to develop an enjoyment of and enthusiasm for reading in the child. The foreword to the Grade 3 student textbook reiterates this principle. A similarity to the themes developed in *Sidi et Rama* stage one is announced as well as a desire to develop short texts close to the 'child's experience' and 'his or her motivations', but also to his or her 'intellectual and educational potential'.

The analysis of the 35 learning units in the Grade 1 textbook, reveals that the selected themes are indeed related to students' life experiences. Child characters (school friends, brothers and sisters) and their families (teacher, father, mother, uncle, aunt, neighbour) are involved in activities, situations or episodes that are common in the students' daily lives. The main character, Sidi, walks to school and introduces a friend to his father. The characters Sidi and Rama's journey to Dakar, and the everyday urban events they experience there are covered in a series of about ten lessons. Topics related to rural life are also present: drawing water from a well, preparing the fields, fishing, or a football game.

The thematic choices reflected in the texts therefore seek to respect the students' culture and to motivate them to read by creating a fictional world close to their own. The communicative functions and social uses of writing are ignored, however. Objects from outside school embodying written culture (books, information panels, newspapers, recipes, etc.) are noticeably absent from the communication situations proposed in the textbook and therefore are not incorporated in the work on reading and learning to read. Consequently, the initiation into writing occurs more through contact with the thematic diversity of the texts (albeit with familiar themes) and less through their communicative dimension and the context in which they may be read.

In the 15 learning units of the textbook intended for Grade 3 students, one finds a greater variety of texts and themes. Each unit contains three narrative texts on one of these themes: school, family, travel and means of transport, clothing, professions, household activities and health. Starting from situations that are familiar to students, these texts seek to educate students while fostering civic-mindedness. As in the *Sidi et Rama* Grade 1 textbook, the situations are not addressed in their communicative dimensions. This is also the case of the fables (a tale or legend according to the authors) or the poems by authors at the end of the units, which are to be read or memorized principally for pleasure.

While early contact with a variety of different media and texts has been repeatedly advocated in research on reading instruction in recent years, the research has also stressed that learning to read and fostering a motivation to read and to learn to read also depends on students understanding the functions of writing and being aware of situations in which they can use writing (Chauveau, 1997) for purposes of communication. The activities and exercises that feature in the *Sidi et Rama* collection make little use of this fundamental aspect of the initiation into writing, emphasizing instead the comprehension of sentences[56] or the main ideas in the texts and excerpts read in each learning unit and, in the case of Grade 1, learning the written code.

56- In the first learning units of the Grade 1 textbooks, students work from a few sentences.

The communicative dimension of the written texts is nonetheless somewhat more pronounced in the Grade 3 *Sidi et Rama* in the text production activities proposed from Unit 7 onwards: making a poster to advertise a horse race; writing an apology note; describing the steps involved in cultivating peanuts.

The comprehension of sentences and texts

Regarding reading comprehension, the *Sidi et Rama* textbooks reproduce the principal guidelines of the 1987 programme. With different levels of complexity, the exercises for Grade 1 and Grade 3 focus primarily on overall comprehension.

The sentences and texts to be read are always preceded by an image in each learning unit (in red for Grade 1 and green for Grade 2). This image illustrates the information contained in the words, sentences or text. As no indication is given as to how to use the image, the teacher can decide whether or not to examine it with the students. Nevertheless, one can assume that in the classroom, the teacher works with the students to anticipate the content of the text and to verify hypotheses before doing the reading.

For Grade 1, the texts contain words studied in language and are 'learned as whole words'. According to the authors, these words feature in several texts and must be regularly revised so that students can appropriate them. The text must therefore 'be read and explained to the child in order to discover its meaning' (p. 3). In the first learning units, one finds a short sentence (the key sentence that generates the work on decoding) or a series of two or three sentences. These sentences are always in the present tense and in print. Punctuation marks are present but not capitals. The number of sentences to be read gradually increase. They become short dialogues or short narratives. A long narrative about Sidi and Rama's journey to Dakar, containing parts in dialogue, starts in the 11th learning unit and ends in the 22nd. Reading comprehension questions appear only from the 23rd unit on. For the most part, they are about identifying information provided in the text (character actions or states) and require yes or no answers. Some questions involve making inferences from this information. Exercises to reorder captioned images or sentences from a text are proposed more rarely.

Unlike the Grade 1 textbook, in the Grade 3 *Sidi et Rama* no specific guidelines are provided as how to approach the many texts proposed. Underneath the image that opens the lesson, a long narrative text is introduced by a title announcing its content. One also finds dialogue between characters and temporal textual markers are interspersed through the different parts of the text. After the text comes a list of four or five 'difficult words and expressions' along with definitions or explanations. The authors of the textbook do not propose any exercises to work on the meaning of these words from the co-text. Text comprehension is checked through questions and activities designed to develop student reading strategies. These questions and activities involve: tracking (reading a sentence or a passage of text), the selection and linking of explicit or implicit information (linking information provided in the various paragraphs, summarizing the text, coming up with another title); making inferences; the identification and description of the characters (main or auxiliary), and the justification and evaluation of the characters' behaviour or actions. However, the questions do not always highlight the potential difficulties students may have understanding the read text.

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The text production activities related to the theme of the text are also a means of checking students' comprehension of the content. As the reader's behaviour before the text remains implicit, it is to be deduced from the (good) students (based on the activities performed) or to be rendered explicit by the teacher. As will be seen below, this explanation becomes a learning objective that is more prevalent in the teaching materials of the third period.

Learning the written code

Learning the written code is central to the Grade 1 textbook (and probably also the Grade 2 textbook). The sentences and texts proposed are devised with this major objective in mind and 'the progression of the lessons is essentially based on the typology of sounds' grouped together 'for reasons of editorial convenience (e.g. **a** and **o**, or **I** and **u**) or due to 'their articulatory proximity (e.g. **ai** = **ei**) (Ministry of Education, 1990/2003, p. 3). For Grade 3, there is no explicit reference to this dimension of reading instruction (nor to any other!) in the foreword to the textbook. The authors simply state that 'the exercises are inspired by the items of the new programmes and cover most areas and taxonomic levels' (Ministry of Education, no date, p. 3). The analysis of the lessons, however, reveals a strong emphasis on reading comprehension, the main orientations of which have been described above.

Regarding the approach to decoding in the Grade 1 textbook, each learning unit has the same structure of progressive segmentation from a key sentence as described for *Je lis, j'écris* (see above). The 'sounds' are presented in print and cursive, followed by a list of syllables containing them. Students are also invited to read other words or sentences, with or without images, containing these same syllables. Then come various exercises that become more complex as the learning units advance, corresponding to certain exercises mentioned in the 1987 programme. Without any order of priority, they focus either on the letter unit/group of letters (identifying letters in words accompanied by images, copying letters; completing words with letters) or the word unit (identifying words containing the letters or groups of letters studied; copying words) or on the sentence unit (copying sentences; completing sentences with words to be chosen; reordering words in a sentence, writing out a sentence that has been read and memorized) and, to a lesser extent, on the text unit (reordering of a sequence of captioned images or sentences from a text).

While learning the code does not seem to be a major objective in the Grade 3 *Sidi et Rama* textbook, it occasionally features similar exercises on words, sentences and texts. However, they are oriented towards the study of language functions. Concepts relating to vocabulary (synonyms, hyponyms or derivation), grammar (grammatical structure and function, word transformation – affirmative/negative, active/passive), morphosyntax (sentence structure, choice of determinants and anaphora), conjugation (identification and choice of verb tenses; choice of pronouns) and spelling (homophones; noun agreement) are addressed in these exercises. The words and the content of the proposed linguistic material are always linked to those of the read text.

Following this analysis, it appears that, as for the official instructions, the contents covered in the *Sidi et Rama* Grade 1 and Grade 3 textbooks are very distinct. In Grade 1, the core objective is to learn words and the written code. Consequently, the words, sentences and texts that are proposed focus, on the one hand, on building up a vocabulary bank and, on the other, on initiating students into the workings of the written code, as do the exercises that accompany them. For these reasons, work on reading comprehension is predominantly channelled through the repeated reading of words, the comprehension of sentences and tracking information in short texts. In Grade 3, the exercises are primarily designed to develop strategies to understand texts (now longer and more complex) and knowledge about how language functions (grammar, vocabulary and conjugation).

The two Sidi et Rama textbooks clearly illustrate the official guidelines of the second period, both in terms of the objectives to be reached in each grade and the means to achieve them. The approach to the writing code is staunchly mixed and whole-language-based, with the phonological component of decoding not highlighted until the official instructions of 2013, thus being absent. The approach to reading comprehension aims to develop overall reading strategies. The texts are based on themes close to students' experiences so as to motivate them to read and to learn to read, however the communicative contexts of reading and the social uses of writing are little explored, especially in the Grade 1 textbook. The communicative aim of the written texts is nonetheless somewhat more pronounced in the Grade 3 Sidi et Rama textbook in the text production activities.

Teaching materials in French as a second language in the third period

In the third period, the publication of the syllabi was accompanied by various teaching materials. *L'album de lecture 1e, 2e et 3e étapes* (Reading Album, Stages 1, 2 and 3), as well as the textbooks *Moussa et Animatou* (Moussa and Animatou) published in Quebec in 2009, and *Nafi et Moussa* (Nafi and Moussa) published by SARENA in 2013. That same year saw the publication of other materials for the first two-year primary cycle: *Français CI et CP* (French Grade 1 and Grade 2) by the Senegalese publisher Fermon and Hachette livre international; and *Marie, Madi et le français CI et CP* (Marie, Madi and French, Grade 1 and Grade 2). The reading guides *Partenariat pour l'amélioration de la lecture et des mathématiques à l'élémentaire* (PALME, Partnership for the Improvement of Reading and Mathematics in Primary School), and *Pour un enseignement/apprentissage stratégique de la lecture* (For a Strategic Approach to Teaching/Learning to Read) were designed for the first and second cycles of primary school. These different materials are presented below.

Reading Series

This series, which can be considered as a methodology complemented by a volume for teachers, is proposed as a supplementary tool to accompany the introduction of the Basic Education Curriculum (CEB, 2008): *L'album de lecture 1e, 2e et 3e étapes*. It should be noted that these textbooks are used almost daily by teachers, especially from Grade 3. In this grade and those that follow, no other materials are available, unlike in Grade 1 and Grade 2 where there is a choice of different materials to guide early reading instruction. The authors of *L'album de lecture* present it as a 'stopgap' resource (p. 10). The methodological indications (theoretical section) are reserved for the first and second primary school cycles, with an anthology of texts proposed for each cycle.

Each anthology is organized in chapters made up of a set of different text types, the text types corresponding overall to the curricular requirements[57]. The obvious innovation is the introduction, from the first cycle, of narrative, descriptive, poetic and injunctive texts. As the students progress through their schooling, this selection widens to also include, in Grade 2, informational texts, and in Grades 3 and 4, argumentative texts (p. 5). For the purposes of this analysis, only the materials used in the first and second cycle will be taken into consideration.

57- Informational texts are officially prescribed from Grade 1 and descriptive texts are not targeted.

In the theoretical part, the authors state that 'reading is an activity that produces meaning from abstract visual clues' (p. 4). As they put it, 'any situation of written communication positions a particular typ of text. Essentially seven text types can be identified in terms of *communication intentions*. Each type includes many genres and special characteristics that one must master in order to produce them' (p. 8).

More specifically, the authors provide a functional definition of reading. They state that 'reading means using one's eyes to construct meaning from a message we need in order to do something other than read' (p. 4). Authentic texts drawn from various types of writings constitute the main reading instruction materials. The aim is for students to make multiple uses of writing in order to learn, act, play and react.

The *Album de lecture 1e étape* (Reading Album, Stage 1) anthology contains narrative texts (27), injunctive texts (22), descriptive texts (23) and poetic texts (30). These texts are selected according to themes (family, school, habitat, business, health, travel, emerging issues, animals, the environment and shows). All these texts are short and easy to copy onto the blackboard. They evoke a world that is familiar to the children and address educational themes. They have also been chosen for their relative simplicity. It is suggested to accompany the reading of the texts with illustrations that will facilitate the prediction of what is written. The narrative texts contain a large number of temporal markers. The descriptions of actions are presented as a list, indicated by dashes or numbers. There are many punctuation marks. For narrative and descriptive texts, the textbook authors have restricted themselves to using the present tense. The present and the imperative are used in the injunctive texts.

The *Album de lecture 2e étape* (Reading Album, Stage 2) repeats the introduction that features in *L'album de lecture 1e étape* without fully reproducing the approach advocated by the syllabus. It presents a range of text types: narrative texts (19), descriptive texts (12), injunctive texts (9), and poetic texts (11). The texts are a little longer and a little more complex. There is no longer any reference to illustrations, as if they could be dispensed with for Grade 3 and Grade 4 students.

It should be pointed out that no mention is made of the intention behind the texts. This remains implicit. The texts proposed in the anthology are utilized in accordance with the syllabus. As *L'album de lecture* specifies, following the first term of Grade 1:

> The teacher will insist on the examination of the text for clues, keeping in mind the goal of developing silent reading. Confronted with a variety of texts, through silent reading, students will practise identifying clues (form, illustrations, text title, known words, punctuation, etc.) essential to their comprehension and identification. Students will primarily learn to read and not to decipher (p. 5).

The approach is based on having students search for clues that enable them to make assumptions about the meaning of the text, which they then compare to their findings. They then (re)read the text to grasp its overall meaning ('total comprehension'). Time is set aside for reflection and discussion of the text, during which students give their opinion of the text. Finally, the text is read aloud, first by the teacher who brings it to life and presents a reading model, and then by the students (p. 11).

The authors criticize the focus on blending activities (reading instruction), the practice of writing (written production) and reading aloud. They reassert the communicative perspective to be adopted for the teaching of French.

The recommended approach for teaching the code follows and exemplifies the 2008 syllabus (CEB, 2008). Reading instruction begins with students initially learning words as whole words (disconnected from reading and written production). At this point, the link to be established is that between language lessons and reading lessons. A list of words serves as a vocabulary bank for this first lesson. The approach is set out over three sentences: discovery, appropriation and reinforcement. To foster word recognition, two or three words are chosen from the language lesson. They are therefore known and understood. Teachers are advised to write them on the board (discovery), to have the students read and memorize them as whole words, then to have students write and draw them (appropriation) and display them in the classroom. Finally, it is recommended to play recognition games and to have students read the words regularly (reinforcement).

To develop proficiency in blending activities, the approach remains structured in the same way as already described: a sentence containing the phonogram to be studied is drawn from the text. Working with this sentence, the word containing the phonogram is extracted. The syllables of this word are identified. Then the syllable containing the letter is isolated. The phonogram is isolated and written on the blackboard, and then copied on the slates by students (p. 12). This elementarization process is followed by a search for words containing the phonogram to be mastered (auditory identification). In the found words, the spelling that corresponds to the phoneme is highlighted. Syllables are formed from the letter: for example, t a forms the syllable ta. At the end of the lesson on mastering graphophonemic correspondence and syllabic blending, different syllables are combined to form words.

The anthology part of the textbook contains essentially didactic texts. They are simplified and designed to introduce learners to reading. The authors' aim is to instil civic minded behaviour. The texts serve to morally edify and to disseminate patrimonial knowledge, as illustrated by *Sidi et Rama*, as well as knowledge on health. The presence of descriptive rather than informational texts shows that the communicative aim is influenced by the tradition of the classical model. This statement is less true for the injunctive texts, whose plan and organizational content indicates that their aim is to incite the reader to perform an action.

The instructions show that the meaning of the text is grasped from surface markers, clues inspired by knowledge of texts typologies, and that comprehension is built by students actively searching for meaning through silent reading. These methods assume that students have sufficient knowledge of French and reading to understand what the text means. The students must rely on surface clues that favour the formal study of texts, an approach that contrasts with the model of the strategic reader who reads with specific goals, most frequently in order to perform an action. The didactic texts the students are asked to read also mark a distance from the functional model of reading.

To teach the code, the recommended segmentation exercises (key sentence into words, words into syllables and syllables into the letters and sounds to be studied) and blending exercises (from letter-sounds to syllables, from syllables to words) target syllable blending in how it relates to words and the meaning they convey. This shift towards letter-sounds and words focuses more on the visual than the aural. Overall, there is little emphasis on phonological and phonemic awareness.

Moussa et Animatou ; Nafi et Moussa.

These materials were published in Quebec: *Moussa*, in 2008, for Grade 1 students, and *Animatou* in 2009 for Grade 2 students[58]. *Nafi et Moussa* was published for Grade 1 and Grade 2 in November 2013. The two series appeared five years' apart but have common features and are presented jointly in the following analysis. They arose out of a collaborative project whereby Senegalese authors designed and published manuals and textbooks[59]. The pedagogical reference used in both series is the competency-based approach.

Both series adopt a functional approach to reading. The contents refer to a single book used to pursue educational goals and address various aspects of teaching. The choice of texts must favour links between education and the environment, health and living in society. They place a strong emphasis on student activity and explanation. The role of the teacher is to stimulate discussion with the students and to encourage their explanations. It is important to support children's efforts, to correct their incomplete and early writing attempts, to encourage them to use proper and precise words, to ask them to listen to their classmates and to make themselves understood.

To support student explanations, a list of reading strategies is proposed in the student textbook. These strategies encourage students to adopt a reflexive attitude, even if the way to achieve this is very different in the two sets of materials. *Moussa et Animatou* advocates a metacognitive approach: why I read; I read titles and headings; I look at how the text is presented; I look at the drawings or photos and I try to understand them; I think of what I know; I imagine what this text could be about. *Nafi et Moussa* repeats almost exactly the same method while adding to it. The supplementary part diverges from the metacognitive approach by using terms that are meant to be fun. Different colours are used to circle words and bring them to attention, to frame sentences that convey information, to underscore words that are not known or recognized, to highlight the 'disguises' of the morphological markers, or to break up words into syllables.

The student textbooks come with a useful set of tools to work with in class. For Grade 1, there is a word bank organized in alphabetical order, a vocabulary section presented by theme and a list of words with highlighted letter forms; the Grade 2 tools include a spelling and grammar aid.

Signs of a written culture

The style in which the two textbooks are edited conveys a book culture, as initially indicated by the presence of a table of contents and tools. The variety of illustrations and images expresses a desire to present the cognitive functions and instruments of writing. Depictions of signs, maps, newspapers strewn on the ground, a letter being read by a child, an envelope bearing a stamp, a double-entry table or the use speech bubbles to accompany the dialogue all reflect a desire to socialize writing for students. The diversity of texts featuring a variety of graphic clues, functions to similar effect. One can see that some of the texts proposed in *Moussa et Animatou* are reproduced in *Nafi et Moussa*. Their diversity introduces students to varied types of texts. The illustrations and images complement the cognitive tools made available to students.

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58- The user manual is not available.

59- The introduction to the 2008 textbook states that after being piloted, the textbook was adapted. The results are reported as being conclusive. According to the authors, in 2008-2009, SARENA trained 1,323 teachers and principals (FICEA research project, p. 34).

Written materials and the comprehension of texts and writing

Various texts are included in the two textbooks, especially in the Grade 2 version: stories, riddles, nursery rhymes, portraits of people and their occupations, manufacturing instructions, and so on, all systematically accompanied by questions. Answers to the information questions are found in the text. Often they invite readers to speak about their situations or experiences, and to say what they think. The informational texts introduced in the Grade 2 textbook copy encyclopedia entries, usually animal information sheets. The motivation of the reader and the construction of references play a key role in comprehension.

In the *Nafi et Moussa* Grade 2 textbook in particular, students can identify the intention behind the texts by examining their main characteristics. The texts are accompanied by images that adapt to the text types. They conform to a canonical shape, which is highlighted through specific markers.

The examination of the text is an important phase: syntax, vocabulary, relations between sentences, and spelling are all observed. In Grade 2, colours are used to classify the categories of words: nouns and determiners, adjectives, verbs and other words. A particular emphasis is placed on lexical spelling (a list of 645 common words forms the basic word bank) with a view to fostering automatic word recognition (memorization of word lists). From Grade 1, exercises centred on writing little stories are used to check the spelling of words.

Comprehension activities focus on tasks that involve going back over the text and the use of various strategies: spotting explicit information, selecting, grouping and classifying it; anticipating; inferring and extracting implicit information; linking this information to one's knowledge and reacting to it. The authors of *Nafi et Moussa* draw attention to difficulties understanding substitutes and determiners.

According to the authors of the textbooks, a situation for teaching reading comprehension must build on student motivation and develop the abilities of a strategic reader. Its purpose is to turn the reading of a text into a project and to develop the students' abilities to control the activity of reading themselves: 'I read the titles and headings; I look at how the text is presented (texts plans/outlines help identification), I look at the drawings or photos and I try to understand them; I think of what I know; I imagine what this text could be about.' The student is guided to build a mental picture of what the text says.

Teaching the code

Instruction in the code is supported by illustrated alphabets, images or sound cards. These tools are intended to help students learn to decipher and teachers are advised to start reading instruction by having students learn the alphabet. The authors of *Nafi et Moussa* consider that presenting the letters to the students develops phonological awareness.

In Grade 1, students start with the vowels and simple consonants. Then come digraphs and letters whose sounds depend on their position (c, s, g) and consonant clusters. The spelling aid illustrates the main rules. Students are familiarized with the sounds of the language (rhymes). They must then learn to read syllables and to complete words. In Grade 2, in keeping with the CEB, the textbook works on grapheme compounds (eur, ien, ette, ouill, euill, tion and so on). The 2008 and 2013 textbooks recommend that students learn how to combine through syllable blending. *Moussa et Animatou* takes a whole-word (analytical) approach, accompanied by the identification of syllables and sounds. Syllabification exercises are reduced: each letter-sound is accompanied by a series of images and words to identify the letter-sound to be learned. One finds lots of exercises based on reading word lists featuring the studied sound. In contrast, there are no phonological exercises on the words of the language. Students are primarily required to read words classified in lists. Visual memory is stimulated more than auditory memory.

The *Nafi et Moussa* textbooks differ from the *Moussa et Animatou* textbooks on several points. Some of these points are considered here. The first concerns the overall approach to words. *Nafi et Moussa* appeals to the form of the word, its 'visual pattern' (Ministry of Education, teacher manual for *Nafi et Moussa* textbooks, p. 49). To facilitate word recognition, the authors of the materials emphasize the practices of highlighting of letters and writing words on 'tracks'. This makes it easier to observe the parts that stick out above and below. Highlighting the pattern is associated with the initiation into the logographic dimension of writing.

Another difference with the 2013 textbook is the more systematic work on visual and auditory discrimination: 'what I see', 'what I hear'. The main exercises on visual discrimination are: recognizing the sound of a letter in a word, recognizing graphemes in a word; choosing the right written form according to the rules of position; reading tables made of words with the same written form; adding a word to a series of words with a common written form; choosing the correct letter to complete a word. Supplementary exercises include choosing the right syllable to complete a word, adding a syllable in a series of words, or associating two syllables to form a word. The auditory approach promoted by the authors is based on finding 'tricks' to remember the sounds letters make: SSS like snake. The textbook also refers to the sounds of the r and the a, as well as to the 'land of letters'. Syllabication and auditory discrimination activities are also recommended. To work on discrimination, students identify words containing the sound to be studied or find words by replacing a phoneme.

Progression from one grade to the next

A progression can be observed from one grade to the next. Oral communication is very present in Grade 1 and reading is limited to short texts while the texts become significantly more complex in Grade 2. Regarding the code, the level of difficulty is accentuated. In Grade 2, students work on difficult spellings (digraphs or trigraphs and consonant clusters).

The texts become more diversified and also more complex, more closely resembling models of texts for the social practices to which they refer. They nurture the students' written culture.

The authors of the textbooks seek to impart an enthusiasm for reading. They wish to motivate and involve the student. The educational goals are strongly asserted. The themes tend to be more important than knowledge of the language. The proposed texts are used for learning in other disciplines, especially introductory science and technology and environmental education. Moral aims are also evident. The textbooks work systematically on comprehension and seek to form strategic readers in line with the intentions of the PALME. The authors of the 2008 and 2013 materials adhere to a reflexive approach. The two sets of textbooks suggest strategies and 'tricks' to achieve this goal. They recommend explaining these strategies as well as the principles of self-assessment and reflexivity to the students. In *Nafi et Moussa*, one can nonetheless observe simplifications that seem to be in contradiction with forming a strategic reader: the textbook mentions writing letters along a track, the sound letters make and the 'land of letters'. The alphabet cards all come with a mouse, called Word Mouse. Teachers are encouraged to ask students: can you show me an illustration where Word Mouse is inside something? She is inside the truck... (*Nafi et Moussa* teacher manual, p. 86). Whether in the names of letters or on alphabet cards, the terms personify letters and point to a motivational approach that is alien to the constitution of language units as abstract units. They are abstract, precisely because they are used to reading, speaking, writing and listening to an infinity of texts. To speak of word shapes also contrasts with an analytical and reflective approach that mobilizes phonological awareness. The notion of a word shape belongs to a whole-language approach that considers that the general appearance of the word, undifferentiated by spelling, plays a role in word recognition, which is precisely what the student must overcome in order to understand the alphabetic principle.

The teaching of the code is analytical and is based on learning word lists: it goes from short texts to words, from words to syllables and from syllables to sounds. Unlike *Nafi et Moussa*, in *Moussa et Animatou* the approach is more graphophonemic than phonological.

Few writing activities feature. In *Moussa et Animatou* there are a limited number of copying exercises and handwriting is absent. Writing activities have the advantage of being project-based, such as writing a set of rules, making posters, writing a riddle, inventing a story following a template, composing an acrostic poem. However, such projects are not supported by the teaching.

Français CI et CP

The *Français CI et CP* textbooks were developed in accordance with the basic education curriculum (CEB) of 2008. They explicitly adhere to the CEB guidelines, including with regard to the areas of French to be covered in Grade 1 and Grade 2, and the temporal organization of the lessons. For each year, the method is composed of a sixty-page *teacher's guide* and a student *textbook*.

In the introduction to the teacher's guide, the authors reaffirm the principles of the CEB. They define the competency-based approach, reiterate the relationship between oral language, reading and written production as advocated in the syllabus, and present the main orientation chosen for these domains. In keeping with the CEB guidelines, according to a 'general operating model', highly detailed lessons are set out for each learning tier along with a complete procedure for the first lesson of each tier. Student's progress through seven tiers[60] organized over a 24-week period during the first two-year cycle of primary school: four in Grade 1 and three in Grade 2. The operating model breaks down the lessons into the following phases: 'setting the context'; 'appropriation and searching'; 'consolidation and reinvestment'; and 'assessment'. These phases are linked to the procedure followed in the lessons students do in each sub-field of French (oral communication, reading and writing), as described in the CEB. Regarding the 'reading' sub-field, the first phase focuses on reading comprehension, the next two on 'mastering blending' and the last on silent reading, text comprehension and reading out loud. After each tier, integration and self-assessment activities, also recommended in the syllabi, are used to integrate and verify the different points student have learned[61]. A template for an end-of-year assessment as well as a glossary concerning the vocabulary used in the guide are included at the end.

The student textbook opens with a foreword, which also refers to the CEB. In keeping with the teacher's guide, it specifies what students are expected to learn during Grade 1 and Grade 2 through the seven tiers of learning. The logic of the lesson structure is also described with direct reference, including page numbers, to the approach proposed by the CEB for each sub-field.

The specific objectives and the content to be addressed every week are also practically identical to those set out in the CEB: oral communication is addressed from the perspective of speaking activities and from the structures proposed in the syllabus; students work on reading and written production on the basis of text types ('narrative', 'descriptive', 'prescriptive' or 'injunctive'). The work on reading is articulated around two main dimensions: reading comprehension and the mastery of the written code through work on blending. As advised in the CEB, the three sub-fields are addressed in this order and according to the 'didactic information' in the syllabus as described above: two pages for oral communication (I speak); one page for reading (I read); one page for written production (I write).

Due to similarities between the CEB and *Français CI et CP*, and so as to avoid repetition, the following section will focus on the content and exercises these materials feature at the different tiers of learning, in particular with regard to the initiation into written culture, the teaching of reading comprehension and the approach to the written code.

Initiation into written culture through a range of different texts

It was seen earlier that little attention was paid to familiarizing students with written culture in the CEB, especially in its 2008 version. The same applies, in a way, for *Français CI et CP*. As will be seen below, the words and sentences

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60- The 2008 version of the CEB proposes eight tiers.

61- Some of these activities are identical to those suggested in the CEB.

students read at tier 1 are, for the most part, related to the school environment. However, familiarizing students with the purpose of school and the social functions of writing and written media is not one of the goals of the learning units for this tier. For example, in its 2013 version, the CEB emphasizes the importance of introducing students, from the beginning of Grade 1, to how a book is organized, to its cover and the order of pages. With any diversification in written media, the textbook becomes the only reference upon which to construct representations of reading, both for students and for the teacher. As such, it must provide students with tools that enable them to understand the issues at stake in writing.

Proposing different text types for reading and writing can certainly contribute to this objective by underscoring their characteristics and their specific aims. For instance, the general operating model of the lessons proposed in the teacher manual mentions, from tier 2 of Grade 1, that when reading sentences and texts the teacher should always ask students 'where can one read this type of text?' and 'what purpose does it serve?'. However, these questions are not repeated in the student textbook, so the task of clarification is left entirely to the teacher. Furthermore, the Grade 1 textbooks mostly propose sentences and bits of texts, which makes it difficult for students to clearly represent the dimensions of a text (its content, structure and certain linguistic elements that characterize its form as a text). This remark also applies to the sub-field of written production given that the context of the writing task is never explained.

In Grade 2, the communicative dimension of written comprehension and production becomes more pronounced. First, due to the increased presence of complete texts in the textbook (especially injunctive texts) and second, due to the guidelines set in the teacher manual, which are sometimes more developed, in particular regarding the explanation of the content and structure of read or produced texts. This contextualization is even more explicit in the integration and self-assessment activities at the end of the tier. For example, at tier 5, the situation in which a child has to read instructions to give medicine to his sister is described before the presentation of the instructions. At tier 7, in written production, students must write a notice for a missing animal so that it can be found. These end-of-tier activities can therefore contribute to the construction of students' initial representations about the functions and uses of the text types they encounter.

The comprehension of a variety of texts or excerpts

As already mentioned in the section on the analysis of the CEB, at tier 1 reading instruction primarily concerns students' acculturation to the school environment and their language development. This involves 'acquiring an initial set of words', 'discovering basic letter shapes' and 'applying labels' to produce the 'first writings'. The eight lessons of this tier target the whole-word (logographic) reading of words and short sentences (in print and cursive) that are related to classroom life and, most of the time, articulated with words proposed in the sub-field of oral communication.

From tier 2, excerpts of texts (usually the beginning of a story) are proposed and short texts are gradually introduced. The text types are consistent with those recommended by the CEB. In Grade 1: 'narrative texts' (in the present tense) at tier 2 (little stories, a comic strip in three images with a dialogue between two characters); short 'descriptive texts' (description of a character, an animal or a place) at tier 3; 'prescriptive texts' (sentences or sections of text 'to act and make' in the imperative, such as the instructions of a DIY

procedure) at tier 4. In Grade 2: short 'injunctive texts' (an invitation letter, part of a recipe; a health poster) at tier 5; 'narrative' texts or extracts, sometimes containing dialogues or 'connectors' at tier 6; 'descriptive texts' (a story with a descriptive part, a short narrative with dialogue and comments appraising it; a text describing a musician and his work context) at tier 7.

The approach taken to these texts and excerpts is as already specified above. It spans the initial phase of 'setting the context' and the final phase of the 'assessment' of the reading sub-field in each learning unit.

The first phase always includes the following exercises: the study of images and the elaboration of hypotheses from clues; silently reading the text and picking out unfamiliar words; the 'comparison of findings' by the students; the 're-reading of the text' to check back on the initial hypotheses and findings; 'total comprehension' (validation of the hypotheses by the teacher); 'reflection on the text' in relation to its function and the situation in which it may be read; and 'sounding out the text' (reading aloud). Apart from the emphasis on comprehension and reading aloud, the approach requires students to anticipate what the text to be read may be about, and then, once the reading is complete, to confirm or refute their initial hypotheses, following which the teacher focuses on the context and purpose of reading such a text.

After the exercises on the written code ('appropriation and searching', 'consolidation and reinvestment'), which will receive further comment below, comes the final phase, the 'assessment' based on the silent reading of a new text/excerpt (sometimes the continuation of the text previously read) and its subsequent reading aloud.

The aim is for students to read the text/excerpt silently, study the illustrations that accompany it and comprehend its meaning. In Grade 1, the most common exercise is where students must choose from three sentences corresponding to the proposed image. These concern the name of a character, the place or the time of an event. Other exercises involve the rearrangement of the words in a sentence or the sentences of a short text. At tier 4, the teacher can still check student comprehension by asking specific information questions. At tiers 6 and 7 of Grade 2, students read silently after reordering the sentences in an excerpt or in the continuation of the text read in the 'setting the context' phase. Sometimes the exercise is to choose the summary that matches the text. Exercises based on reading true or false sentences related to the images or the original text are more common at tier 7. The teacher can also ask inferential questions.

Finally, students re-read the text/excerpt aloud, upon which the comprehension exercises were based. In this final moment of (re)reading, the focus is, first, on the 'correct pronunciation' of the phonemes in the read words and, second, on the expressive reading of the text (proper intonation).

The approach to the code: from sentence to letters and letters to syllables, and then to words

Following the work on whole-word reading (names, function words) and sentences that began at tier 1, the phases of 'appropriation and searching' and 'consolidation and investment' that occur at the following tiers focus on the written code by 'developing proficiency in blending'. As recommended by the CEB, the approach proposed in the *Français CI et CP* materials is essentially guided by a syllabic-type graphophonemic approach, but without the use of a key sentence. The first phase is devoted to the study of sounds and letters and the second to mobilizing the concepts acquired in the context of studying syllables and words.

In the 'appropriation and searching' phase, a few words from the text/excerpt read during the 'setting the context' phase (reading comprehension) serve as the starting point for the study of the 'written forms' of a sound. These words are presented in joint writing and in print. They are first broken down into syllables. The 'sound' and its different 'written forms' are then drawn from the syllables and isolated. Next students do tracking exercises to locate the studied sound in written words (and their determinants) accompanied by images. The order of presentation of the sounds at the different tiers corresponds to that proposed by the CEB. At tier 2, this work focuses a single sound. From the second half of tier 3, a minimum of two contrasting sounds are studied (/p/ and /d/; /a/ and /b/). The principle of phonogrammic versatility and digraphs begin to be addressed from tier 4 (au/eau; on/om) and intensified at tier 5 (c/qu/k, s/ss/ç/c). Some consonant clusters (tr, pr, gr, fl, pl, cl) and suffixes (ette, esse, elle, eille) are studied from tier 6. In Grade 2, the exercises diversify somewhat. Apart from identifying sounds in the provided list of words, students sometimes have to classify them (/ks/; /z/; /s/) and find other words with the same sound. The identification of letters and silent letters (verb endings, non-functional letters or derivatives) is also present in some of the exercises at tiers 6 and 7.

The phase of 'consolidation and investment' seeks to 'go back from letters to syllables, then to words' (Diakhaté et al., 2013, p. 3). At tier 2, students work from the studied sound /letter to find other words that begin with this sound (especially first names), blend (combine) syllables to form words and read words or a few short sentences. From tier 3, students must also read a list or lists of syllables and a greater number of words containing the studied sounds/letters. In Grade 2, the exercises do not change but the number of syllables and words to be read increases. Students may be asked to do exercises completing words with the sounds/letters targeted in the learning unit or to read two to three sentences at the start of a story at tiers 6 and 7.

As mentioned, this practice phase is followed by a comprehension activity in which students read a new text or excerpt both silently and aloud. This enables them to utilize the knowledge they have acquired on the written code.

The *Français CI et CP* materials are strongly based on the official guidelines of the CEB. The initiation into written culture occurs discreetly by exposing students to a diverse range of text types. These texts are the starting point for activities working on comprehension, mastering the written code and written production. The progression is determined by sentences and the start of texts in Grade 1, evolving to short but complete texts by Grade 2. The approach to comprehension presupposes that students predict the contents of a text, then verify it by reading it silently and aloud. The questions asked by the teacher can be literal (Grade 1 and Grade 2) or inferential (Grade 2). Reading fluency is a goal running through the two grades. Reading fluency also focuses on the correct pronunciation of words and expressive reading.

The approach to the written code is graphophonemic. Starting from the concepts of word and syllable, progressing through systematic exercises, it seeks first to develop phonological awareness and second to mobilize this competency in forming words through syllabic blending. The progression is in step with the growing complexity of the phonograms and familiarization with some morphograms.

It is worth noting the significant presence of images, intended to help students complete all required tasks, and the assessment and self-assessment activities at the end of each tier and grade.

CHAPTER 7 ....

Marie, Madi et le français

This method is available for Grade 1 and Grade 2. It follows the requirements of the 2008 syllabus and certainly also in part those of 2013. Two characters, Marie and Madi, appear throughout the textbook and explain step by step how they achieve their objectives. For example: 'To photograph a word, I see the picture and I guess the word. I say the word aloud and I remember the sound. Then, I close my eyes and I try to see the word in my head.'

The order of the language activities is 'listening, speaking, reading, writing' (Teacher Guide, 2013, p. 11). The natural order, historically and genetically, is to work from oral language to writing. The textbook states that the articulation of oral language to writing occurs through the study of writings in the social sphere (text types) (p. 11).

Many colour images illustrate the oral communication situations, presenting elements related to the themes. Reading and writing instruction are organized from oral communication activities.

Written culture

The illustrations of the student textbooks display the diverse functions of writing: labelled products on a merchant's stall, a sequence of images with speech bubbles, captions, a reproduction from a book or the textbook *Marie, Madi et le français*, labels supplementing illustrations or showing vegetable crops, a father reading a newspaper, badges, the signs of a hair salon, a dispensary or stands at a book fair, various posters, small series of food images, a display case at a documentation centre, a ranking presented in the form of a table, and so on. The writings and texts presented in the textbook illustrate various communicative intentions. It should be pointed out however, that communicative functions and intentions are not underscored as something requiring an explanation to attract students' attention to the communicative aspects of the writings and texts. The textbooks provide a resource that is easy to use.

The textbook is intended to be a working tool. It contains a table of contents. Other tools are found at the end of two textbooks: an illustrated alphabet primer, an illustrated group of model sounds, a series of qualifying adjectives, tables of temporal and logical connectors, as well as indicators of place. Examples of words used to ask questions are also provided and the textbook ends with a verb conjugation table in the present tense, the past tense and the imperative. The different objectives are marked out by pictograms throughout the textbook. They indicate the phases of oral communication, reading, writing and team activities as well as the instructions to be read by the teacher.

Writing comprehension and the teaching materials

One finds three sets of writings in the textbooks: 1. Easily accessible short texts, often accompanied by large illustrations, intended to stimulate student interest and oral communication; 2. Different text types to listen to, read or memorize and then be recited in front of the class; 3. Enhancement texts: posters for a school bazaar, announcements; instructions for a treasure hunt; picture books; stories; an informal letter; the account of a visit, a birthday, an election day at school; descriptions of places, short portraits, the description of a shared meal or a race; prayers; captions for illustrations; instructions for living in harmony with others, instructions for manufacturing objects, or a recipe. In the Grade 2 textbook, the same principle is maintained for the three sets of texts but one finds even greater variety.

In Grade 1, the work on reading comprehension is often based on the teacher reading aloud. In Grade 2, the method advocated in the syllabi is adopted: students must look for meaning and use their knowledge to read silently. To facilitate students' predictions, the texts contain language clues relative to their type. The outlines of the standard texts and the titles are supposed to announce their aims. Enumerative and temporal markers are identified, as well as a lesser amount of logical and argumentative markers. The tense used is simplified and also specific to the text type.

In both grades, students work on developing an overall understanding of the text through reformulation or word-completion exercises. Comprehension is checked by having students reformulate prohibited actions, through gestures and reading aloud.

The texts serve as models for writing activities: the production of sentences (e.g. reconstructing sentences from labels, description of a place; recommendation) or texts (e.g. reconstructing sentences filling in words, inventing sentences from a bank of words). The communicative intention may be explained through writing. It is not emphasised in connection with the reading of texts.

Teaching the code

As with other teaching materials and as prescribed by the CEB, Grade 1 begins by learning whole words. Next students work on phoneme-grapheme correspondences. They start with the simplest ones, alternating between vowels and consonants. They continue to master graphophonemic correspondence by learning more complex spellings or morphograms.

For the instruction of the code, the textbooks roughly follow the CEB. Words are chosen in relation to themes and the lexical knowledge students have already acquired, as shown in the following example taken from the teaching materials (pp. 48-50 of the teacher manual and pp. 74-79 of the student textbook) in which illustrations coupled with labels serve as a starting point.

First, the teacher reads the words, has the students repeat and draws attention to the 'sound' to be learned. Students are shown how to pronounce the given sound (where to place the tongue, e.g. for /t/). They identify words in which the phoneme is heard. They are also asked to recognize the syllable ta[62]. They then identify words in which the letter can be seen. When this initial identification exercise is completed, the manual recommends that the teacher read the story 'The Monkey and the Tortoise' presented on the same page and check the students' comprehension. An extended exercise on the 'sound' being studied is suggested, based on finding students' first names that contain the phoneme /t/. These names are written up and the *t* highlighted. On the next page of the textbook students study a larger selection of words. Only the words that the students recognize are highlighted. The words are read aloud by the teacher and repeated. Students track the sound /t/ as well as the syllables ta and to and the teacher reads the *did you know* reminder: 'Did you know that words are made of syllables? Syllables are groups of letters that are pronounced in a single emission of the voice: the sound /ta/ corresponds to the syllable' (*Marie, Madi et le français*, Grade 1, p. 77). Once again, students are asked to recognize words

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62- Referred to as a sound and not a syllable.

that feature the letter 't', as well as the syllables to and ta. This learning and exercise phase ends with students writing out the letters and syllables.

The following page introduces new words with images. This time the words are used to check for comprehension. They are read aloud by the teacher, who also reads aloud a nursery rhyme in which words are missing. Students use a counter to indicate when they hear the teacher reading a word in the blank. Another writing activity is a word-completion exercise.

Once again, the students read labels, using them to form a sentence that is the first sentence of the recital: 'One morning, the turtle eats up all the potatoes in the monkey's vegetable patch'. The exercise ends with the reading of a new *did you know*: did you know that a sentence is a sequence of words that make sense? Generally, the sentence begins with a capital letter and ends with a full stop.

In Grade 2, the work on grapheme-phoneme correspondence continues. To see how this sequence is developed, one may take the example of situation 9, 'Actions to save the earth' (pp. 40-42 of the teacher manual and pp. 56-61 of the student textbook). The work starts from an illustration of an intersection covering an entire page. This setting of the context is intended to encourage the students to express themselves and to state what is forbidden at the intersection. On the next page, they are asked to pronounce two words with the letter g: *courage* and *gâteau*. Students must recognize that the letter g is not pronounced the same way in each of the words. Following this exercise, students must independently read what is called an environmental rhyme. They can be helped if necessary. To prove they have understood the text, the students must name two actions that are forbidden. The rhyme is studied and accompanied by gestures, read expressively. Some words are highlighted: the teacher reads them and has the students repeat them correctly. The students are encouraged to place counters on words containing the sound /g/ (*fagot*, *gaspille*) and the sound /ʒ/ (*jamais, objets, image, protéger*). Students repeat the words. The way to articulate the /g/ and the /ʝ/ are described in a speech bubble. It should be pointed out that the sound /ʒ/ does not exist in Wolof. The students read labels accompanied by illustrations: *guidon, gâteau, gomme, mangue, griffes, éponge, étagère, girafe, manger*. The students' attention is drawn to the fact that a letter can have different sounds and that the 'g' placed before the letters 'a', 'u', 'o', 'r' and 'l' is pronounced /g/. When the 'g' is placed before the letters '' and 'e', it is pronounced /ʒ/.

It should be noted that phonogrammic and orthographic-type exercises play a small role in the development of the entire exercise.

Progression

Initially, a whole-language approach is taken to reading: the students are asked to recognize common words. They work on phoneme-grapheme correspondence, starting with monograms before moving on to more complex graphemes. The syllable unit is also very present: reading syllables is a regular exercise for students.

The sentences to be read start off being strongly based on the words learned during the oral communication sessions. Teacher-led read-alouds feature more frequently during Grade 1. The texts become more complex and students' reading becomes independent in keeping with an approach modelled on the official syllabi.

The students' involvement is repeatedly solicited through questions related to their experience and their environment. The *Marie, Madi et le français* textbooks seek to clearly present the tasks and concepts to be learned. In keeping with this approach, one finds arrows indicating the direction of reading from left to right in sentences or lines up to the middle of the year in Grade 1, a clarification that is certainly due to the fact that the students also learn Arabic. However, the authors do not actually refer to instruction in this other language, which has been taught officially for ten years.

To teach the code, a graphophonemic approach is adopted. One finds few systematic phoneme identification, tracking or deletion activities targeting the development of phonological awareness. Auditory and visual discrimination exercises feature systematically. It should again be emphasized that the units of language are systematically explained over the course of the lessons (e.g. syllable, word, sentence).

From Grade 2, text comprehension is based on prediction, verification and then reformulation. Questions target the students' involvement or appraisal.

The textbooks propose a series of exercises, certainly more than found in other methods. It can also be noted that a substantial part of these exercises takes the form of writing activities.

Partenariat pour l'amélioration de la lecture et des mathématiques à l'élémentaire (PALME) : Grade 1, Grade 2 and Grade 3.

Three methodologies, whose exact title is *Pour un enseignement/apprentissage stratégique de la lecture Guide de lecture CI, CP, CE1/CE2 (PALME)* - For a Strategic Approach to Teaching/Learning Reading Guide Grade 1, Grade 2 and Grade 3/Grade 4 (PALME) - seem to fit the framework of the 2013 syllabus (CEB, 2013). The presentation part of the guide refers to the 'current syllabus', although without specifying which one. These guides are intended to support teachers' work on reading and writing instruction during the first three years of primary school. They demonstrate a consistent willingness to think in terms of the cohesive progression from one stage to the next. The focus on lesson content specifies what teachers should do in the classroom. The guides affirm that writing and reading are closely linked and are acquired simultaneously. It is in this perspective that a 'scale' of reader/writer competencies is presented in synchronic order. The use of the term scale is noteworthy: it highlights the emphasis on assessment, as the teacher must be able to evaluate the students' performances in order to prepare them for the end of cycle assessments.

As a consequence of the focus on reading and writing stated in the introduction, the way in which the other fields of French instruction fit into these activities is neglected. In the introductions to the Grade 1 and Grade 2 guides, there is no description of how oral communication, grammar, conjugation and spelling are articulated. The need for a strong link between teaching the French language and reading instruction, heavily emphasized in the 2008 syllabus, no longer seems to be strongly asserted. The plans proposed at the back of the guides provide more precise answers regarding the bridges to be established between the different fields. The PALME specifically targets reading and indicates that each learner must become a better reader and that the support offered to students is based on 'a new metric scale founded on the five components of reading' (p. 2). For Grade 1 and Grade 2, the five components, described as being derived from research on reading and proven

practices, are listed as: phonological awareness, the alphabetic principle, vocabulary, comprehension and fluency. For Grade 3-Grade 4, at which stage it is assumed that students have acquired the code, 'the metric scale...is... essentially dedicated to learning vocabulary, comprehension and fluency' (p. 3).

The following section shows how these components are defined in the guide for the first cycle. Two areas of reading are defined: first, mastery of the code and word identification and, second, reading comprehension. 'The use of phonemic awareness and the alphabetic principle contribute to mastering the operation of writing' (p. 2). The mastery of the code is accompanied by the instant identification of familiar words and vocabulary development. Comprehension occurs through the development of simple strategies as well as through reading practice. In the guide for the second cycle, the reading components are more precisely described. This point will be developed in detail below.

Teaching methods and components during the first cycle

The week-by-week lesson descriptions and the proposed calendar bring to light the various teaching components of this guide.

For Grade 1, *concerning the teaching of the code*, the lesson description and plan foresees an initial transition phase lasting 12 weeks. During this phase, students learn specific vocabulary and, to initiate them into written culture, the teacher reads aloud 'the story of Sali', presenting it on the blackboard and using exercises based on the text. Working from the story of Sali, students must learn to use writing tools and understand that in French one reads from left to right and from top to bottom. Through the teacher-led read-alouds, students discover that writing conveys meaning: they listen to and understand a story, they are able to answer questions about the characters and the feelings that motivate the main character. Writing-related concepts are discovered: the concepts of sentence, word, syllable and letter. Students are also familiarized with the alphabet, they learn to differentiate vowels and consonants, and develop an understanding of how syllables are formed (to, ta, ti, te, tu, ata, tata, etc.). The story is analysed for further exercises: the different parts of the text are identified (beginning, middle, end) (p. 8) and students must designate the part of the text that presents Sali, the main character, and pick out information that contributes to the construction of meaning in the story. The description of the lesson procedure proposes links with the language lesson. As it happens, the students are asked to introduce themselves and to produce an oral narrative themselves.

By week 13, the approach changes. During the same week, the sessions highlight the five components of reading, going from the smallest unit (letter, sound) to the meaningful text unit. The lessons focus on phonemic and phonological awareness (working on two sounds), on word identification (whole-word recognition), vocabulary (for example, first, next, finally) and the reading aloud of the story of the schoolgirl Soda, which takes up the theme of Sali's story and some of the words learned in previous lessons. Students work on fluency by reading aloud. Assessment consists, first, in reutilizing the words learned during the week and writing a sentence, and, second, in filling in a table with all the words in a sentence containing the sounds /a/ and /o/. Sentence writing can be considered as one way of integrating the knowledge constructed on the code.

An original component of the PALME Grade 1 guide is the work on phonemic skills based on the 'I hear, I see and I write.' activity. To work on these skills orally, students identify a sound in words and then replace it with another sound (sac-soc), or they delete a phoneme (omar-mar). The tasks proposed at the end of the guide are based on isolating sounds, identifying the same sound in different words, identifying, among several words, the word that does not contain the specified sound, phonemic blending, segmentation, subtraction, addition and substitution. They are sometimes asked to classify words according to whether a given sound is found at the start, middle or end of the word (p. 42).

One may also note how the advocated approach to language relates to vocabulary. The aim is clearly to expand students' lexical knowledge in connection with the language lessons and themes addressed in the prescribed texts, but a more detailed study of language is also introduced from Grade 2. From the middle of Grade 2, synonyms, opposites and words from the same family are classified among sets of words. In other exercises, students are asked to 'recognize word segments and to use them to find the meaning' (Ministry of Education, PALME, Grade 2 Reading Guide, p. 13) or to understand words with more than one meaning.

Regarding comprehension, for narrative texts, students are required to establish links between a story and actual events, to identify the stages of a narrative or a comic strip, to distinguish the initial situation, the transformation and the final situation. The elements relating to the comprehension of descriptive texts are less determined: students are simply asked to recognize some clues within the text. As with the other types of text, the clues for understanding the injunctive text are based on the ability to make predictions about the content, but the aim of the text emerges through more precise questions. For example, for the text 'How do you make a water filter?' (Ministry of Education, PALME, Grade 1 Reading Guide, p. 81), the proposed questions are: 'What is a water filter? What material should I use? What must I do first? And last?'. It should be noted, however, that these questions alone do not suffice to explain the aim. This task is left up to the teachers. Overall, one may consider that the comprehension strategies practised deal with all types of texts, with little differentiation: recognizing known words, sentence-by-sentence linear reading, decoding, identifying noun groups or adjectives. Questions targeting information are asked after the students have discovered the text (through both silent reading and a teacher read-aloud).

At the end of the year, to work on writing students are set the exercise of producing a descriptive text and an injunctive text. Up to that point, they mainly work on handwriting and spelling.

In Grade 2, the five components are addressed in the same order as in Grade 1, starting from the smallest, non-meaningful element, working up to words to identify instantly, classify and understand, then to the texts to be read silently, and finally to expressive and fluent reading. The emphasis of the work is on *graphophono-logical correspondence*: letter forms are identified and tracked in words, and then practised through syllabic blending. *Comprehension questions* focus on the ability to identify the main idea of the text, to select informa-tion in response to questions, to identify the setting of the action and who the characters are, or to reformulate the beginning and end of the story. The students are also expected to draw on their own experience to predict or justify what will happen in a story, to explain the motivations for the characters' actions, and to describe a situation or event. The reading of the injunctive texts verifies comprehension in a different way: students use the text to create an object, a dish or to guide their behaviour.

Writing activities focus on handwriting, spelling, writing short sentences and producing small texts with a beginning, middle and end.

Teaching methods and components during the second cycle

In Grade 3 and Grade 4, writing skills are added to the five reading components (reminder: phonological awareness, the alphabetic principle, vocabulary, comprehension and fluency). These components are described very precisely in the Grade 3-Grade 4 reading guide. This guide aims to clarify how to assess reading and what to assess. It includes guidelines for the general planning of activities, on the pedagogical approach (a model for a lesson framework is proposed (pp. 24-25) and presents competency scales and standards that can be evaluated). Unlike the Grade 1-Grade 2 guide, in the Grade 3-Grade 4 guide, there is no collection of texts, nor is there a reference to any textbook that teachers could use.

Phonemic awareness refers to a 'skill': the discovery of the sounds of language, translated by the ability (referred to as a strategy) to match letters to sounds. According to the reading guide, the alphabetic principle consists of being able to divide the sounds of words into units, using and combining letters, and discriminating between words. This component mobilizes 'strategies' to identify letters (aurally, visually and graphically), to form syllables, rhymes and words, and to segment words. For Grade 3-Grade 4, it is stated that the teaching of 'letter/sound correspondence and the principle of blending are not systematically taken into account' (p. 4). Decoding is considered a stopgap strategy. Students continue to work on the systematic identification of words. This work is carried out during the reading of a text or during a spelling or vocabulary lesson. The aim of the *vocabulary* component is for students to grasp the meaning of words in context, but also for them to understand them in connection to words with similar meaning, and to acquire knowledge of lexical or morphological polysemy (affixes). Connectors and textual markers must also be understood. The *comprehension* component is described by the need to grasp the meaning of the ideas expressed orally or in writing. Based on the clues present in the text, the student must be able to predict and justify what it is about, identify the setting and the time of the actions and events, to specify how the elements are described and how the events occur or the actions that are performed. The Grade 3 reader must also be able to reconstruct and summarize a text, to establish the sequence of events or to classify information in order of importance. The teacher develops strategies to help students spot clues (graphic, semantic and syntactic clues, but also paratextual clues such as those in titles, images or the shape of the text) so as locate the targeted information. Readers must also draw on their prior knowledge and reference social practices in order to understand. The fifth component, *fluency*, concerns reading silently and aloud. It is based on fluent reading (instant word identification or decoding), but also on the ability to establish connections between ideas, to make reading expressive and to self-correct when a mistake is made. Fluency also implies the mobilization of comprehension.

The reading guide indicates that various writing skills are required to produce writing. These skills are based on reading and involve graphomotor abilities (mastering of handwriting skills); language knowledge (orthographic, lexical, syntactic knowledge and knowledge of punctuation); cognitive abilities to construct mental images, and to anticipate and organize elaborate content. Writing a first draft and then revising and rewriting it are habits to be developed, with the help of the teacher.

It should be pointed out that comprehension is based on strategic dimensions that run through the reading of texts, as well as on specific dimensions of texts (title, text plan - text shape), images and syntax. It should also be mentioned that reading aloud fluently is not only associated with the situation of communicating a text to others (p. 25). It is intended as a way to work on reading speed (p. 18).

It should be noted that the activity of writing implies that of reading. The knowledge and skills acquired from reading texts are also mobilized in writing.

Modelled on the 2013 syllabus, the described approach is summed up in the following points (p. 4 and pp. 24-25):

- Presentation of the basic text, depending on the text type, specifying the reader's intention and recalling the concepts already worked on.
- Immersion phase through silent reading of the text. During this phase, clue-finding strategies are applied to enable the learner to establish predictive assumptions.
- Re-examination of the text, taking the form of a shared read-aloud to confirm or refute the predictions. Unknown words are pointed out, defined and linked to other words of similar meaning. The teacher has the students make inferences and guides them in constructing mental pictures.
- Systematic reading to deepen understanding and refine fluency. By pointing out the title, images, connectors and substitutes, the teacher has the students establish logical connections and develop inferences.

This approach assumes that the basic text contains a large number of words that are known graphically and semantically. Similarly, one must ensure that the syntactic elements (sentence structure) are acquired (p. 4).

Comprehension is developed through progressive refinement. First, students are asked to discover the meaning of the text by applying clue-finding strategies to the text and its environment, from which they propose a hypothesis. Under the teacher's guidance, students look for the meaning of words in the context. When confronted with new words, students must mobilize strategies that help them to read and understand (examining the word to find a word of the same family, looking around the word, re-reading the sentence, looking in the dictionary or asking a classmate to help). Students pick out elements specific to the text type as they read (punctuation signs, the plural *s*, the feminine *e*, plural conjugations ending in *-ent*, pronouns, and a number of adverbs and conjunctions: *et, ou, où, mais, car, parce que*).

The teacher is also expected to ask the students if they have found what they were looking for in relation to their reading intention and if they have achieved the goal that was set. Students may also be asked to summarize the text and to find missing information. (Ministry of Education, PALME, Grade 3/Grade 4 Reading Guide, p. 22 and p. 24). The teacher also helps students construct mental pictures, to make inferences (causes, place, consequence, etc.) and to confirm or refute the assumptions and predictions they made before reading.

Complementing the different comprehension strategies, reading fluency exercises round off the work on comprehension. Speed, expressiveness and accuracy are practised and evaluated.

Regarding written culture, one can see that the various texts proposed for Grades 1-2 are presented in a format similar to texts in the reference practices. Titles, plans and illustrations reflect the different aims.

Without knowing what texts are proposed in Grades 3-4, it is not possible to make any assessment of the lessons. The methodology invites teachers to introduce reading lessons by finding words to describe the aim of the text. The methodology also invites them to 'share the reading project by specifying the purpose of reading the text' (p. 24).

For Grade 1 and Grade 2, the focus is placed on the characteristics of French handwriting, the handling of books, posters, etc. and certain functions of writing so that teachers may plan the inclusion of related activities. However, without an accompanying textbook, the format of the methodology, which does not propose any images or texts already with a page layout to work on with students, limits the potential for highlighting these dimensions.

Progression through the grades

There is a notable progression over the course of the first three grades of primary school. This can be observed in the reading components, the writing abilities, and the work on the code and language units. However, the progression is barely noticeable in terms of the collection of texts: they are very close in level between Grade 1 and Grade 2, and in Grade 3 it is not known what texts the teachers are asked to teach.

Work on the code begins in Grade 1, through the identification of graphic signs, knowledge of letters and the alphabet. As soon as the teaching starts on the first letter forms, students also begin to work on forming syllables. Students systematically practise deciphering, combined with exercises to develop phonemic awareness. In Grade 2, the teaching adopts a graphophonemic approach primarily centred on consonant strings or on reading affixes. The work on phonological awareness continues. In Grade 3, students work on automatically identifying words based on morphological knowledge.

The study of language units becomes more diversified: from the beginning of reading instruction, students learn about textual, morphological and phonographic markers. In Grade 3, these categories are broadened to include knowledge about noun and verb plurals, verb agreement, punctuation, anaphora and textual markers.

This gradually acquired linguistic knowledge is used to correctly produce sentences, little stories 'in tolerated alphabetical writing' (p. 119) and then revised texts.

A particular didactic transposition occurs in what is referred to as word identification: the instant identification of familiar words. In the reading guides (Ministry of Education, PALME Grade 1-Grade 2 and Grade 3-Grade 4), word identification takes on a distinct meaning compared to previous guides and textbooks. In previous materials, words are either to be memorized logographically, like images or shapes so as to be immediately recognized, or they are identified by means of phonological analysis, the indirect route. The PALME method is also based on identifying words through phonological analysis. It even proposes systematic activities to work on phonemic awareness. But the manner in which students integrate the direct identification of words differs.

In the PALME reading guides, a distinction is made between two specific ways of identifying words: the first way is designated by the components of *phonemic awareness* and the *alphabetic principle* (Ministry of Education, PALME Grade 1 and Grade 3-Grade 4 guides) or the term graphophonemic correspondence (Grade 2 guide; the second way is described in terms of *word identification* (Grade 1, Grade 2) and *vocabulary* (Grade 1, Grade 2 and

Grade 3, Grade 4). Understanding words, recognizing them aurally, visually and graphically, and, from Grade 2, morphological-lexical knowledge of the language, are combined so as to foster automatic word identification. Connections are established between components. The approach to vocabulary is revised, inviting students to engage in an analysis of the language. For multilingual students, it is certainly relevant to encourage them to analyse the units of language whether phonologically, phonographically or morphographically.

The use of the term *reading strategy* calls for closer analysis. This term is used both to label operations considered as low-level (deciphering and decoding) and so-called high-level strategies such as making inferences or constructing a mental picture of the text. The term *strategy* highlights the role of the reader as a strategist. It invokes the inferential cognitive model of reading. But the use of the term is not accompanied by a reading model that hierarchically differentiates sets of components that cannot all be automated in the same way. What is even more surprising is the heterogeneity and the level of description of the strategies (Ministry of Education, PALME, Grade 3-Grade 4 reading guide, p. 5). The term is sometimes used to designate strategies that the student must implement (for the alphabetic principle, the forming of syllables, rhymes or words; for vocabulary, finding other words close in meaning to the word being studied; or for comprehension, it refers to the development of clue-finding strategies). At other times, it refers to what the teacher should do (organize lessons on predicting meaning). Or at other times again, it describes types of school reading activities (reading silently or aloud, etc.).

Bilingual teaching materials (ARED and ELAN)

A preliminary remark is necessary before beginning this section. The analysis of bilingual materials places the authors of this study in a paradoxical situation as they are analysing reading instruction materials in a language they do not know. It is true that these materials are also available in French, some of them at least. The French versions serve as a model for the materials in national languages and/or support reading instruction in French. In the Associates in Research & Education for Development (ARED) project, reading instruction is conducted concurrently in the national languages and in French, whereas in the École et langues nationales en Afrique (ELAN, School and National Languages in Africa) project it is staggered in two phases. It would be imprudent to assume that the materials are the same in the different languages, however, when reading instruction occurs concurrently, as in the ARED project, one may more legitimately presume that a strong similarity exists. This is the position adopted here, for lack of multilingual knowledge.

For the analysis of bilingual reading instruction in the first three years of compulsory schooling, only the textbooks are considered where the ARED programme (2012/13) is concerned, as the teacher guides were not available for consultation at the time of writing this report. For the 'École et langues nationales en Afrique' project[63] (ELAN, July 2013; 2014), the teacher and students' French 'booklet' is available, this booklet being introduced after one year of reading instruction in the national language. With regard to ELAN, the way in which reading instruction is organized in the national language is not known. The working document produced by Seck (July, 2014b) partly fills in the details concerning ARED and ELAN. Are the progression

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63- The ELAN project is planned to last 3 years. It started in 2013 as the follow-up to the ARED project. It concerns reading and writing instruction in six national languages. The project anticipates the introduction of bilingual education in 30 classes per year. Ten classes are concerned by reading instruction in Wolof and French. The schools concerned by the ELAN project have programmed training for the inspectors, school principals, teachers and substitute teachers of the classes included in the project. A monitoring system is due to be implemented.

and the approach the same as for instruction in French and reading instruction in French? The information about the training and monitoring that has been implemented for teachers is not accessible (see presentation given in Geneva in June 2014). It is therefore sometimes difficult to comment on the elements that are supposed to accompany the progress of lessons such as they are presented in the pages of the textbooks.

Whether they are written in French (the so-called conceptual textbook), Wolof or Pulaar, the ARED textbooks refer, in their introductions, to the basic education curriculum (2008) and its organization into chapters corresponding to tiers of competencies, with three tiers per year. Each chapter-tier leads to an integration activity. The introduction states that the textbooks are based on a typology of texts to which themes are added. The authors refer to a convergent didactic method using an approach modelled on the CEB and on transfers made possible by a rigorous comparison between sounds in the national language and in French, with differences highlighted where they exist. The themes are for the most part those addressed in the language lessons, as provided for in the syllabus (CEB, 2008). They are close to the children's everyday experiences.

In Seck's view, this approach based on textual typology favours the initiation into the world of writing:

> The approach through text types is an educational option that instils in learners a competency for textual classification that will help them get their bearings in the world of writing. This competency consists of being able to identify the types of text in the programme from specific invariables including the communicative intention, vocabulary, verb tenses and connectors (2014b, p. 4).

In this approach, students read a text type (narrative, descriptive or injunctive), in which a key sentence is identified. This key sentence includes the *sound /letter* at the centre of the lesson. The same text can be used to study several sounds from different key sentences. Thus, as pointed out by the author, the study of the sounds/letters is inserted into 'a cohesive discursive context' (ARED, p. 3).

In the ELAN project, students learn letters in the national language following the same order that is adopted in teaching French a year later. The learning of revised letters is reinforced. At the end of the first cycle, all letters and sounds are studied. The ELAN project proposes texts from which the letter-sounds are selected. The designers of the method distance themselves from the process whereby a text is developed from the sound or sounds to be studied.

The link between reading instruction in the national language and in French, whether the two are introduced concurrently (ARED) or are staggered (ELAN), is left to the initiative of teachers and should, according to ARED, be based 'on a preliminary comparison between the cohabiting languages' (p. 3).

Constructing a written culture

The Grade 1 *ARED textbook* in French is based on drawings that sometimes illustrate uses of writing: a sign at the entrance of a school, the word 'bibliothèque' (library) written above a door, notebooks with letters on a desk, a bookshelf full of books in a living room, the label of a tube of glue. The images are in two colours and contain the main information on which students will base their hypotheses. The textbooks also feature icons that guide students in the tasks to be performed. In the Grade 2 textbook, speech bubbles accompany series of images. Leuk the Hare, a national hero, is also seen holding a reading textbook.

It should be pointed out that there is no image displaying texts, such as posters, signs or messages on digital media.

It is also worth noting that only one drawing with books is shown in the Grade 1 textbook in Pulaar, the world depicted in the textbook being more rural than that of the French equivalent. In the Grade 1 Wolof textbook, on a table, one can see a cube with the label 'sugar' and a carton with the label 'milk'. A bottle with the label 'oil' and a cube with the label 'yeast' accompany the description of actions to be undertaken to make doughnuts. In the Grade 2 textbook, captions are written under the images. One can also see Leuk the Hare reading a textbook while seated at a table or lying on a mat. The Grade 3 textbook shows a drawing of a computer room, with speech bubbles in a series of drawings and a sign indicating the entrance to a school.

Overall, the world depicted in the drawings in the national language textbooks is more rural and representations of uses of writing are less differentiated. On the basis of the available documents it is not possible to determine whether or not it is advisable to speak of different uses of writing presented through the textbook drawings.

The organization of the textbooks through narrative, descriptive and injunctive text types evoking familiar themes forges the idea of a communicative purpose to writing. A few texts at the end of the Grade 2 textbooks offer further opportunities to discover narrative, descriptive and injunctive texts. If the texts are understood by students, reading them will enable them to perceive this purpose. Are teachers encouraged to explain the communicative intention and the linguistic clues that express it? It is impossible to know. It would seem that the practice of identifying different texts from standard types helps the students to better understand the diversity of writings.

The themes of the *ELAN textbook* are close to the child's everyday life and similar to those adopted by the syllabus for French language lessons (CEB, 2008): the names of the children in the class, school, family, the market, etc. Students are asked to make drawings illustrating the captions under the drawings used in class. These are didactic writings of a similar type that are repeated throughout the lessons, contributing to the construction of representations and knowledge of certain cultural functions of writing. The conventional organization of the textbook pages essentially comes down to reading captions, providing a written response, writing and drawing.

The textual typology is not repeated in the ELAN materials. They simply contain eighteen stories with different themes, the first being dedicated to the alphabet.

Writing types and approaches to studying writing

Regarding the *ARED textbook*, the chapters 'I tell a story', 'I describe' and 'I order' structure the textbooks of the three grades. They present more or less short texts reflecting a range of communicative intentions. These didactic texts, accompanied by a drawing, introduce the reading lessons. They contain dialogue and punctuation markers as well as markers specific to the text types. For example, enumerative markers are used to indicate successive steps in a description of actions. In the Pulaar and Wolof texts that feature in the ARED textbooks, there does not seem to be the same variety of textual clues (for example in injunctive texts). However, without knowledge of these languages, it is difficult to be categorical.

The different texts are certainly read after studying the drawings. Do the students formulate hypotheses? Must the students test their hypotheses themselves before listening to the teacher read the texts aloud? It is difficult to answer these questions without a guide. The reference to the official syllabus may be considered sufficient.

According to the authors the *ELAN textbook* provides a small collection of stories in French (Teacher's Book, July 2013, p. 4). Each story addresses a theme, which provides the opportunity to explore the vocabulary in depth (p. 13) and gives rise to the study of several sounds. To favour the search for meaning and the formulation of hypotheses, the methodology advises the teacher not to read the text if the student must decipher it. The aim is to place the students in a situation where they search for meaning however memorization of the text after it is read aloud by the teacher is avoided. The teacher can help with the decoding process by having the students identify the known or recognized words (whole-language approach) and encouraging them to decode words letter/sound by letter/sound or syllable by syllable. After fully deciphering the story, the focus turns to comprehension. The teacher asks questions that require the students to reflect (p. 9). Then comes work on reading fluency, to develop expressive and rapid reading. Finally, with writing acting as a driver of progress in reading, the story can serve as a model to be imitated and the teacher can encourage the students to write their own stories. The students must be encouraged to write and their writings should not be systematically corrected. The teacher can choose to pick out certain mistakes to address particular points.

Each thematic unit is presented in the same way (the textbook is made up of 18 units). A title announces the theme, with six blank rectangles drawn below, all the same size. Under each rectangle there is a caption. Once the captions have been deciphered, the students illustrate them. The thematic unit ends with sentences to be completed and other drawing exercises on the same theme. From unit 15, students are required to write a sentence ending a little story. The theme of work serves as the basis for describing various occupations and the profession the student wishes to practise later in life. Each writing exercise is introduced by a lexical preparation as well as by suggestions for activities. Students also do copying exercises.

Comprehension is essentially about understanding words or sentences or else focuses on constructing a common set of references. It is often developed from lexical knowledge. The description of planting seeds is used to introduce markers such as first, then, next and finally.

Teaching units and approach to the study of sounds

The ARED textbooks (in Grade 1) start by teaching words: first names, familiar common nouns that also appear in language lessons (father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, principal, sir, miss, school, class, hello, good evening, etc.). Then, after a few weeks of school and until the end of Grade 2, the basic structure of the reading lesson is organized around studying one or more graphemes.

The learning unit opens with an introductory text placed under an image that expresses its content. This small text contains all the key sentences featuring the different letters and sounds to be studied in the learning unit. A lesson corresponds to the study of one letter-sound; it is structured in two parts: reading and the production of writing.

Working from a key sentence drawn from a text, the *target grapheme* is identified. It is recognized, read and practised. Recognition is cultivated through different written forms (print, cursive, upper and lower case) and by reading a few keywords. Words and sentences must then be read. It is worth pointing out that the sentence contains the words already read, allowing for whole-word recognition and lexical comprehension. For the exercise, the 'sound' must be recognized in the words and used to complete words. The study of each sound ends with the reading of a few words drawn from the lesson and a few sentences referring to the contents of the text introducing the lesson.

It is difficult to clarify if, for example, during the French lesson, in the word *balai* (broom), students must identify the sound of the letter 'a' in the /ɛ/ or only in the first syllable. A word that features the /wa/ sound (*ardoise* [slate] raises) the problem of how to organize a sound-based approach, as the textbooks and curriculum put it.

The core exercises consist of recognizing letters, finding missing letters, forming or reading syllables, recognizing words, or putting words in order to form a sentence. Drawings help students understand words or sentences. Some exercises are specifically designed to help with sentence comprehension, such as reading one or two sentences and associating them with drawings.

It should be noted that traces of a whole-language approach are sometimes evident: students are even asked to draw the shapes of a few words (e.g. p. 38, Grade 1, 2012.).

The integration activities involve writing words or a sentence based on the content of the texts that have been read.

The *ELAN textbook* for teaching French begins with the study of the alphabet, which must be mastered by the first three months of school. The instruction is supported by images, selected to match letters: for instance, for the letter c, a picture of a lemon (*citron*). For the letter d, the number 2 (*deux*) is shown. These images can be used as references throughout the year. The students soon begin to work on letters/sounds and to learn frequently used words (whole-language approach).

The various captions are systematically deciphered through the identification of known words or phonemes, leading to the recognition of the word. Students work on the syllabic unit: forming words from syllables or breaking words up into syllables. They also do syllabic blending exercises: a consonant card (alphabet) is associated with a vowel and the syllable they form together is read out by students.

Teachers are advised to do auditory discrimination exercises: for example, the *pigeon vole*[64] repetition game to distinguish /u/ from /y/. Particular attention is paid to consonant strings that do not exist in Wolof: **cl**asse, **fr**ère or **tr**ouve. Phonemes are classified in boxes so that students can distinguish them and understand that the first two letters of **tr**ouve are two separate phonemes, /t/ and /r/. Each thematic unit includes an exercise on phonemic awareness. Students have to find words containing the same phoneme or are presented with minimal pairs between which they must discriminate (pain-main).

64- A game in which one person recites a list of nouns and after each item adds the word *vole* (flies): *lapin vole* (rabbit flies), *canard vole* (duck flies), *voiture vole* (car flies); the other participants must raise their hands when the noun in question flies but keep their hands down when it does not fly. This game may be adapted to work on auditory discrimination: the teacher reads out a list of words, maintaining the convention of repeating *vole* after each one, but asking students to raise their hands only when the word contains a specific vowel or consonant sound.

Progression

Unsurprisingly, the number and difficulty of graphemes to be studied increases over the course of Grade 1 and Grade 2. The *ARED textbooks* follow the study plan recommended by the CEB, supplementing it with graphemes specific to the national languages. The texts prescribed in Grade 2 are shorter and simpler, but varied. One may postulate that the approach is also modelled on the CEB and places students in situations where they read different types of texts silently. In Grade 3, graphemes no longer seem to be studied systematically. The reading lesson focuses on comprehension (introduction, diagram, p. 2013). It is structured on the basis of a text, followed up with questions or instructions (written in Wolof, therefore not understandable for the authors of this report). The introduction to the Wolof textbook states that it works on the detailed comprehension of vocabulary and the meaning of the text. Syntactic and lexical features are also identified. The knowledge of these characteristics is put to use in the production of writing: students are asked to create a set of sentences presenting the different facets of the text type being studied.

The *ELAN textbook* follows the following progression: graphemes are taught first in their simple form and then in their complex forms: for example, /o/ is introduced by the grapheme 'o' and then by *eau*.

It should be pointed out that phonemes specific to French, e.g. /ʒ/ or /ʃ/, are introduced in the first semester of reading in French, from Grade 2. It should also be noted that the graphemes are repeated several times.

Regarding the ELAN materials, the texts students read also become longer; the captions under the rectangles to be illustrated are larger and knowledge of punctuation and vocabulary boosts the ability to understand a few sentences on the same theme. However, this does not yet qualify as reading comprehension.

The functions of writing are not addressed, exposure to writing being essentially academic. There is a constant effort to make activities attractive and fun, however reading is not motivated by an explicit function. Having students systematically do drawings is a way of involving them in activities, checking their reading comprehension and stimulating writing.

One is obliged to admit that there is a lack of information on so-called bilingual teaching methods. What teaching content is recommended in the national language guides? How do they advise teachers to establish comparisons between languages? What dimensions do they work on? Answers to these questions would clarify whether or not a reflective approach is adopted and, if it is, what language components it focuses on. It would be particularly interesting to know what oral communication situations students work on in class. One may assume that everyday language acts are not taught, as, in principle, students already master these. Do the teachers work on oral communication to prepare a reflexive approach to language? In the ARED materials, for written communication, the typology is modelled on the CEB. Are the proposed texts developed from an oral perspective?

Where reading comprehension is concerned, the advantage of this choice is that it exposes students to texts in their own language and provides them with knowledge about the texts. The approach adopted in the ELAN materials puts the emphasis on stories, creating a fictional world close to the children's everyday lives, and familiarizing them with one type of text among others.

Learning to read should be facilitated at least from the standpoint of deciphering, since students are initiated into writing from a language they know, in which they can be expected to understand the words. However, the use of the national language for teaching purposes differs from its use in everyday conversation, so this choice does not magically do away with all obstacles. The technical language of school and the concepts used to describe teaching content construct a different relationship to language and are certainly perceived as foreign by students. Working with students on the sounds of spoken language, in an approach inspired by phonological awareness, would certainly facilitate the change in relationship to language that is expected of students.

RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS OF GRADE 1 TO GRADE 3 READING INSTRUCTION MATERIALS

The analysis of all of the reading instruction materials in the above corpus brought to light many features, however they will not all be reviewed again here. Instead, this section shall focus on the points that appear to be most important in relation to the CEB specifications, as well as to the progression and to the reading instruction components recommended by current research.

The first conclusion to be drawn may seem surprising. It is often assumed that there is a consistent disconnect between syllabi and the teaching methods. However, the analysis shows that no medium of instruction in the corpus deviates strongly from the official requirements. In fact, for the most part, the teaching materials almost totally conform with the requirements of the 2008 CEB. Many teaching materials adhere so strictly to the CEB that they are almost replicas. One may wonder if they inhibit innovation, particularly in relation to teaching methods, which have certainly continued to develop since the 2008 CEB. The teaching content would appear to be frozen in time, whereas it should evolve over time in keeping with research, new social expectations and know-how built through experience. It is indeed surprising to note that most of the educational materials published in 2013, five years after the 2008 CEB, are very strongly aligned with it. Developing teaching materials for publication certainly takes time, but once they are distributed to schools, they will be used for many years. Therefore, there is a clear need to reflect on the relationship between the syllabus and teaching materials, and to define the difference between a syllabus that sets goals, guidelines, methods and objectives, and the teaching materials tasked with operationalizing them.

Contrary to what the foregoing may suggest, the teaching materials do show some differences and changes with regard to the syllabi. These differences or changes come to light, for instance, in the balance struck between reading and writing instruction, in the aims of writing, in the adoption of an approach that is meta-cognitive or emphasizes explanation, in the choice of texts students are asked to read, and in the approach to mastering the code. However, before looking at these aspects in further detail, two more general points must be added: one concerns progression and the other the materials used in bilingual instruction.

A review of the corpus of materials (see bibliography) clearly shows that the publications give precedence to reading instruction during the first cycle. It is clearly of fundamental importance, but this emphasis has effects on the subsequent progression. From the second cycle, teachers rely on older teaching materials that display differences in terms of the choice of texts, the proposed activities, or even the approaches (see below). The lessons certainly progress less regularly if the teacher is obliged to resort to the teaching materials published during the second period of syllabi (*Sidi et Rama*).

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Concerning progression, the analysis shows that expectations vary strongly between one grade and the next. Instruction in oral French along with the whole-language approach to words and the teaching of deciphering by syllabic blending is the first step to be taken. From Grade 2, the student is confronted with sustained instruction in the code that leaves little room for integration through practice. In Grade 3, the available materials count on the students being proficient in deciphering, which vocabulary and spelling work are supposed to have rendered fully automatic. One has to conclude that there is no real curricular alignment and that the progression is marked more by the gaps in the concepts to be mastered than their continuities. These gaps are accentuated by the textbook publishing policy.

The *bilingual teaching resources* are more (ARED) or less (ELAN) aligned with the 2008 CEB. The real-time bilingualism of ARED imposes an almost daily alignment, whereas in the ELAN project the text work focuses almost exclusively on stories, so in this regard it does not follow the CEB. It is impossible to know from the documents that served as the basis of the analyses if storytelling and teacher-led read-alouds are used in the classroom or if students receive instruction in oral expression in national languages. As the relationship to language is very different at school, one may postulate that it is in fact taught, as was the case in the 1980s in countries or regions where French was the first language of instruction (France, Belgium, Quebec and French-speaking Switzerland).

As mentioned above, the changes apparent in the teaching materials of the corpus and which have been highlighted here, relate to the balance between the teaching of reading and writing, the use of a new approach intended to be metacognitive and explanatory, the choice of texts students are asked to read and the approach to mastering the code.

The balance between teaching reading and writing has shifted in the PALME materials: reading instruction has become the priority, gaining in importance compared to the teaching of writing, which was previously prioritized. Unlike other educational resources, the PALME proposes a change of direction in writing activities in favour of orthographic knowledge. The PALME seems to be aligned with the 2013 CEB.

In the teaching materials co-published by SARENA, in the *Marie, Madi et le français* series and the PALME materials, the approach changes in terms of the explanations that are expected of students. The SARENA publications are inspired by metacognition and advocate the use of tools that serve to clarify strategies intended to be productive. *Marie, Madi et le français* uses the characters Marie and Madi to explain conceptual knowledge and learning strategies (e.g. 'a sentence is…' or 'when I tell a story, I…'). The PALME refers to different levels of strategies to be highlighted (see comments in the earlier analyses).

Textual diversity is one of the recommendations that stands out in the curricular documents. Overall, this diversity is reflected in the teaching materials. In the most recent materials, one can observe a real change in terms of the choice of texts and the way they are presented on the page. This forges a written culture that is certainly conducive to learning to read, provided students understand and work on these texts. Cheaper materials, with a more basic layout in black and white, such as the PALME textbooks, offer less scope for stimulating reading. However, even with more limited means, the presentation of texts in the Grade 1 and Grade 2 PALME materials is such that one can identify the main characteristics of the texts to be read.

The underlying assumption in teaching from text types is that knowledge of the characteristics of the texts and exposure to different text types foster the development of diverse reading abilities. This conception, advocated by the 2008 CEB, is in contradiction today with a different reading model in the PALME materials. In the PALME, the reading model is that of a strategic reader who constructs a mental picture of the text content. Constructing a mental picture implies that texts are treated with little differentiation. This is a noteworthy change that could have significant consequences for the future.

Continuing on the subject of *the texts* proposed in the teaching materials, in some textbooks, for example in *Marie, Madi et le français*, one can observe three sets of writings: 1. Easily accessible short texts, often accompanied by large illustrations, intended to stimulate the students' interest and oral communication; 2. Texts of different types, to listen to, read or memorize so as to be recited in front of the class; 3. Enhancement texts that contribute to building up knowledge and provide additional models. This diversity is intended to form good readers. For a learner reader, it is hard to read a long text containing a lot of unknown words and in which the structure of the overall text and the sentences is complex. In set 1, it would seem astute to propose short texts that for the most part contain known words and address a theme or text already discovered in class. Set 2 then introduces students to diversified texts and content; these texts are to be read aloud by the teacher, who then comments on and explains them, or they may by explained through a reading prepared by a student for the class. Set 3 can be used for silent reading by students if they are interested in a question or a theme. As the teacher is at hand to help, this set can be used to stage reading situations mirroring those that a student encounters in ordinary circumstances.

The last point concerns *mastery of the code.* The materials differ in respect to this point. The SARENA materials adopt a more whole-language approach. They speak of the shape of words in reference to Gestalt theories. This way of considering what today would be referred to as the logographic approach raises questions. In keeping with the same approach, these materials advocate the reading of word lists, but they also teach the alphabet and feature phonogram-tracking exercises. The other materials include exercises on identifying pho-nograms or groups of letters, syllabic blending and using syllables to form words. All the materials essentially propose a graphophonological approach, except the PALME ones, which advocate a fine analysis of words to foster phonological awareness. These materials also highlight the direction of reading in French from left to right and from top to bottom, as well as learning the alphabet.

One further consideration before concluding. The corpus analysed here certainly does not cover all the materials available in Senegal. Based on what has been analysed, one may consider that Senegal has sufficient reading instruction materials containing an interesting and relevant range of texts and exercises. It would not be useful to propose the development of a new methodology. Rather it is a matter of highlighting the most promising texts and activities and training teachers to use them and to supplement the resources they have at hand, insofar as these resources correspond to the third period of syllabi and propose more than just a collection of texts as in *L'album de lecture*. This final consideration applies to Grade 1 and Grade 2. As for the second cycle of the primary curriculum, a new methodology would be welcome, if it is not already available, as the Grade 3-Grade 4 PALME acts more as a general guide and does not propose a corpus of texts and activities.

KEY POINTS

1. The syllabi, programmes and teaching materials provide a range of indications and information that interact dynamically with each other. The analysis shows that the information often overlaps. This may become problematic with the new national policy on school textbooks and teaching materials (May 2013), which is opening up the field to private publishers. The functions of these various documents and the information they convey should be clarified.

2. In the syllabi and teaching resources, the students' multilingual abilities and the status of French as a second language should be taken into account. These documents speak of French as a second language. There is a need for explicit guidelines to mobilize students' abilities and to foster links and comparisons between languages. The students' linguistic abilities, and their relationship to oral and written expression in the different languages should be clarified, and the teaching methods adapted accordingly.

3. The new priority that is emerging in favour of reading comprehension, perhaps to the detriment of written production, calls for further examination. A balance must be found between teaching comprehension and the production of texts. Reading is constructed in the interaction with writing and vice versa.

4. Activities that favour emergent writing and the production of texts from the start of written communication lessons should be promoted. Such activities facilitate the initiation into writing. However, these activities, which would complement exercises on copying or producing sentences, are not proposed in the teaching materials. Intelligent copying, which consists of analysing the word, memorizing it and writing it from memory, could also be taught.

5. To facilitate the initiation into writing and the reading-discovery of texts, it would be useful to include activities that prepare reading and anticipate the difficulties in the texts. Predicting what a text talks about before reading it – both in national languages and in French – and framing the reasons behind the search for meaning, would support the students' efforts to construct meaning.

6. In the bilingual teaching materials, there is no clear indication whether or not oral expression is part of the teaching plan. To prepare students for the practice and study of language at school and to teach students to produce formal text genres, oral communication lessons in the national language would help students learn to read in the national language and in French. Anthologies of oral texts could be created and used to build a shared reference to be drawn on for reading instruction in French. Such a reference could encourage reflection on texts and languages.

7. The analysis of the syllabi reveals a significant shift in the progression of the teaching content between the first and second cycles of primary school. Adjustments should be made so as to ensure greater continuity and to fully develop concepts instead of abandoning them for new ones.

8. The analysis of the teaching materials reveals that Grade 3 is somewhat the poor relation with regard to published materials. To ensure a more efficient progression throughout the first two cycles of primary school, it would be useful to publish teaching materials that meet educational expectations in terms of text comprehension and the mastery of a diverse range of text types.

9. To promote reading instruction in a second language and the development of a written culture, it would seem important to differentiate the texts used to teach reading. Three sets of texts with differing functions should be proposed: (1) Easily understandable short texts through which students learn how to decipher and read fluently; (2) Texts of different types, to listen to, to read, to understand or to work on with a view to reading/reciting them in front of the class. These more demanding texts should be accompanied by a description of the content in the national language or by a focus on the purpose of the texts in national languages; (3) Enhancement texts that contribute to building up various kinds of knowledge, providing opportunities for silent reading in connection with a reader project as well as serving as additional references for text models.

10. It is assumed that a good reader has the ability to read different kinds of texts. This is based on diversifying reading strategies, which is in turn supported by the reader's knowledge of the texts. The hypothesis that students have a cross-cutting competency is not a supported by didactic research.

11. The materials analysed essentially propose a graphophonemic approach to the code and deciphering. This approach would benefit from being broadened to include phonological analysis and work on phonological awareness through phoneme identification, deletion, replacement and removal activities. Such activities may also be applied to national languages.

12. Some of the teaching materials are careful to precisely define the concepts of 'sound', word, sentence, text, etc. This attention to cognitive clarity is commendable and should be promoted. For emergent readers, these are new and abstract concepts that cause misunderstanding; students must be given the means to understand and use them correctly.

13. In the teaching materials, the meaning attributed to 'sound' is vague and fluctuating. The term should be clarified so as to specify whether it refers to a phoneme, a syllable or a sequence of letters denoting different linguistic units (affixes, endings or other units).

3. THE CONTENT OF TEACHER AND SUPERVISOR TRAINING AS IT PERTAINS TO READING INSTRUCTION

The documentation available to analyse the link between training content and reading instruction is slim, heterogeneous[65] and non-specific. In this section, a few further points will be added, starting with the organization of initial teacher training. It will then quickly focus on the structure of the training content and comment on training in reading instruction. Finally, the information gathered on continuing training and on the staff that oversee training (the supervisors) will be presented.

Readers of this document review should bear in mind that the Senegalese education system is characterized by the presence of many teachers with no professional qualifications (53.8 per cent in 2008, according to a recent IBE report, January 2014). Initial training, continuing training and the training of supervisors are therefore crucial to achieving the goals of education for all and improved enrolment (10 years of compulsory schooling).

THE STRUCTURES, ORIENTATIONS AND CONTENT OF INITIAL TRAINING

Two institutions were created in succession following the closure of the écoles normales: the Primary Teachers Training School (EFI, École de Formation des instituteurs), established in 1993[66], which provides a six-month training course, and the very recent[67] Regional Training Centres for Education Personnel (CRFPE, Centres Régionaux de Formation des Personnels de l'Éducation), which organize nine-month initial training courses.

The reform the EFI underwent was piloted by a project to create a competency-based training course, through a framework that defined core competencies, training objectives and indicators. All these components did not yet amount to a programme and a training curriculum. This vast project, which has also resulted in a major curricular revision, defined a number of principles for initial and continuing training. Its aim is to make the training versatile (from preschool to primary school) and professional, emphasizing the analysis of practice and counting on the future teachers to self-train. Either the senior (*baccalauréat*) or junior (*brevet*) secondary school diploma is required, but it is primarily the entrance exams, testing knowledge of school subjects, expression and communication skills (probably in French), and the ability to summarize an educational theme, that determine admission to the EFI. The exit profile expects that the teacher has acquired, among other skills, the ability to 'manage' learning in French, national languages and Arabic.

The training is organized into three fields: field 1, pedagogy and didactics; field 2, environment, population and sustainable development; field 3, research and development. The basic competencies (23 in all) are mar-

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65- The training plan established by the Department of Training and Communication (Ministry of Education, DFC, 2012); a 2013/2014 schedule; a work routine from the Regional Training Centre for Education Personnel; a document from the Director of Preschool and Primary Education containing the implementation plan for the EFI competency framework (1999/2000), documents concerning education activity cells organized by the Guédiawaye Teaching and Training Inspectorate (calendar, minutes, reports); interviews with officials from the Faculty of Sciences and Education and Training Techniques (FASTEF, Faculté des Sciences et des Techniques de l'Enseignement et de la Formation), education and training Inspectors, two Directors of Training Centres (Louga and Dakar) and some student teachers. The preceding sources are supplemented by the report by Mr Aliou Ngoné Seck (no date) *Formation des encadreurs et des enseignants au Sénégal* (The Training of Supervisors and Teachers in Senegal), submitted to the IBE in July 2014 (2014b).

66- Decree 93530 of 30 April 1993.

67- Decree 2011-625.

ked by a managerial vision of education that stresses planning and assessment. A tendency to lessen disciplinary knowledge to the benefit of multi-, inter- and transdisciplinarity is evident. Differentiated and cooperative instruction is also advocated, along with extracurricular cultural activities. The training naturally also seeks to implement teaching and learning sequences for different groups of people. The question of diversity seems to be of greater importance than the teaching content. The orientation of the training reflects that of a general didactic approach focusing on the mastery of teaching principles. As a specific disciplinary dimension related to reading, future teachers are expected to implement techniques to diversify reading strategies. The reading instruction model is that of learning to read through reading and that of implementing different reading strategies. The training provides knowledge on teaching, including learning theories, teaching large groups, differentiated learning, cognitive psychology and interculturality. The teaching content associated with each competency is very diverse in nature, listing disciplinary content, alongside knowledge of what information must be officially displayed, or administrative correspondence.

The decision-makers seek to promote education in national languages and Arabic. Trainees are expected to have acquired highly specific, targeted knowledge at the end of the training, namely the mastery of the transcription and didactics of national languages. These competencies are based on an introduction to the 'general components of linguistics', knowledge of the 'international phonetic alphabet', 'the official Senegalese alphabet' and the 'alphabet of the International African Institute', the initiation into 'the transcription of national languages' and knowledge of the 'didactics of the mother [and] foreign language' (Ministry of Education, competency framework for initial training, experimental version under revision, December 1999).

One of the competencies included in field 3, documentation and research, is formulated as follows: conduct research to solve a personal problem or a problem in your personal environment. The content associated with this competency is knowledge of action-research investigative techniques, scientific research, interviewing techniques, documentary techniques, other skills involving self-study, reflective practice, innovation and documentary research.

The Regional Training Centres for Education Personnel replaced the EFI and the Regional Training Centres (Pôles régionaux de Formation) by merging the two. It was expected that the CRFPE would be jointly run by former EFI and regional training centre managers. The training content of these new centres closely follows the EFI competency framework (CRFPE, 2013), underpinned by a concern for continuity in the concepts used from preschool to the lower secondary level, and going as far as to integrate basic youth and adult education as well as that of modern Koranic schools. For now, this framework, reorganized as a training plan from 13 October 2013, is only a first step towards drafting an initial and continuing training programme. These centres train preschool, primary and lower secondary level teachers as well as teachers for basic youth and adult education.

The nine-month training course is organized in three phases: (1) Academic reinforcement for the first month. (2) Vocational training from the second to the eighth month (3) Work experience in a class, in a position of semi-responsibility for the ninth month. On-site training in a school already features in phase 1, through work experience. In phase 2, a one month job shadowing internship rounds off the vocational training given at the training centre. All the internships take place in a demonstration school.

Candidates are admitted to the initial training for primary school teachers on the basis of having their senior secondary school diploma (*baccalauréat*) and doing an entry test to measure disciplinary knowledge and general knowledge. After the training, the focus in on the ability to plan lessons and to build teaching-learning sequences that take into account the target audience and are in accordance with the Basic Education Curriculum. The goal remains to train versatile teachers who can handle instruction in French, national languages and Arabic. The future teacher must also be able to manage a bilingual class. The operationalization of these high-level expectations is founded on training that primarily aims to develop linguistic proficiency ('fundamental knowledge' of the languages of instruction and mastery of the principles and techniques of written and oral communication, p. 5). It seems that it suffices for teachers to master knowledge of the subject to be taught (grammar, spelling, conjugation, vocabulary). There seems to be little attention given to the specificities of the subjects or to incorporating recent research on didactics; methodological principles structure the implementation of the teaching-learning sequences rather than the didactics of each discipline. The knowledge to be taught, such as it is generally defined, should compensate for this. This general knowledge focuses on teaching trainees to plan, design and implement teaching-learning sequences, including for the management of a bilingual class and the teaching of functional literacy. By mastering the didactics of bilingualism and the comparison of the phonetics and morphology of a national language with that of French and Arabic, trainees will be able to achieve language-teaching objectives in different languages. Of the 30 hours or so per week that the initial training seems to contain, approximately six of these are devoted to French, linguistics and literacy. The structure of the training suggests that the course includes four weeks of classes. How much time is devoted to reading instruction? It is impossible to answer this question on the basis of the available information.

CONTINUING TRAINING: SYSTEMS AND CONTENT

Based on the analysis of documents and interviews (see note), a picture of continuing training emerges in which it divides into three types of operations: (1) A few (rare) large-scale continuing training operations; (2) Decentralized events in the initial training centres, initiated by training education inspectors (IEF), and, more regularly, in school and district pedagogical cells; (3) Cooperation projects, especially projects for the introduction of bilingual reading instruction, giving rise to targeted training courses. Each type of operation is supported by trainers, sometimes international and national trainers. This implies the availability of supervisors with specialized knowledge, who certainly draw on diverse, but disparate experience.

Type 1 combines two major operations that appear to have had an impact on teachers and supervisors in different regions of Senegal, if not to say throughout the entire country. The first is a competency-based approach to training advocated by the Basic Education Curriculum of 2008 and the second a training course developed in connection with the Partnership for the Improvement of Reading and Mathematics in Primary School (PALME) to prepare teachers to use the reading guides *Pour un enseignement/apprentissage stratégique de la lecture* (For a Strategic Approach to Teaching/Learning to Read).

Many interviews conducted with education and training inspectors, as well as with principals and teachers, mention the 2008 training course. It was intended to be a large-scale operation and seems to have amounted to ten days spread over 2008 and 2009 (seven days of basic training and three days of remedial training).

No specific documentation is available to elucidate the training content and the specific content of the training course, in particular the content related to reading instruction in French, Arabic and national languages. As a result, this content cannot be included in this analysis.

Regarding more local training operations (type two), pedagogical activity cells are planned at the level of the IEF. Documents gathered in Rufisque and Guédiawaye show that six training days were planned for 2013/14. Of these six sessions, one focused on reading instruction (managing reading during the first primary cycle and lesson method during the second cycle). This teaching is certainly still provided in the IEF cells.

The training sessions organized at the level of the school and district pedagogical cells often include the presentation of a reading lesson by a trainee teacher (practical examination to obtain the teaching proficiency certificate (CAP, Certificat d'aptitude pédagogique)[68]. The attending professionals give feedback on the lesson, often critically, in the manner of inspectors (there are comments such as 'good written preparation', 'good knowledge of the lesson framework', etc.). Points for improvement are highlighted: e.g. at what moment in the lesson should the teacher read the text aloud? The advice given in the feedback steers trainees towards the formal requirements of the curriculum.

Regarding the third type of operation, within the limited time devoted to cooperation projects, opportunities are created for reading-related training and experience-building. Bilingual education projects are certainly the most stable framework for such operations: the ARED project spans ten years and has certainly enabled the construction of solid experience that is simply waiting to be utilized.

The interviews with teachers who participated in the project describe a training course given by a specialized inspector, targeting reading and writing instruction in Wolof, the use of the textbook and the development of a terminology, a sort of dictionary of words stabilized in Wolof. The teachers involved in the project use a logbook in which they note their questions. Regular meetings provide opportunities to discuss these questions or they can be put to the inspector during his or her visit.

TRAINING FRAMEWORK AND RESOURCES

The Faculty of Sciences and Education and Training Techniques (FASTEF) was born from the ashes of the École Normale Supérieure founded in 1962 for the training of school teachers (lower secondary level). The new institution was tasked with meeting the training needs of teachers at the lower and upper secondary level, as well as those of the inspectors used to supervise the greater part of the Senegalese education system. This section focuses exclusively on the training of preschool and primary school inspectors. Inspectors are in charge of administering and managing the services of the Ministry of Education, initial and continuous teacher training, the supervision of school organization and educational activities, and advising decision-makers (see Seck, July 2014b). Teachers and principals mention the inspector resources available for teacher training in bilingual classes and as participants in various cooperation projects. The current orientation does not seem to favour discipline-based training for the teaching of French, mathematics or other school subjects. The overall increase in the applications and international orientations of education policy are causing a shift in the training content to monitoring, evaluation and management.

68- Holders of the CAP gain permanent appointments after a few years of teaching.

Currently, two FASTEF departments train inspectors. One (F2B) trains versatile inspectors for preschool, primary school and basic youth and adult education. This training stream takes in teachers with a master's degree in teaching a specific subject or a master 1. The course lasts two years. The other department (F2A) is piloting a new training course for inspectors (F2B). The F2A course, which lasts two years, enrols primary school teachers who hold a teaching proficiency certificate (CAP) and have taught for at least five years. The two streams are accessible through a very selective entrance exam. It seems that the official texts make no mention of the pilot training course. Yet, this is the course that seems to have trained the majority of inspectors.

The aim of these courses is to develop academic and professional competencies, but it has not been possible to include their programme and content in this analysis. The information that features in the currently available documents does not seem up-to-date and the documentation (training plan, etc.) is being rewritten. No syllabus or programme plan was made available for this review of training.

Like all universities, FASTEF must adhere to the Bologna system (bachelor-master-doctorate). The recognition of the qualifications awarded by the CRFPE, henceforth recognized as tertiary-level qualifications according to the interviewees, should be the responsibility of the university or at least the training should be recognized by it, especially regarding teacher training for the lower secondary cycle (a dual-discipline training). Responsibility for training inspectors and teachers is in principle shared between the Ministry and the university. It is subject to discussion and can be a source of tension that sometimes makes dialogue difficult. It seems that the number of future inspectors in training is low and FASTEF officials were reluctant to take in new students this year.

There are eight FASTEF trainers in total (they are required to be trained inspectors and to hold a doctorate). Some will soon reach the age of retirement. Twenty contractors are employed to work on training, teaching and classroom work.

KEY POINTS

This review of training brings to light the following key points:

1.   Inspector training is currently versatile, tending to accentuate management, administration or monitoring. Today, the specialized training course run by FASTEF concerns lower and upper secondary education; no specific training is provided on didactics that could be applied to the teaching of French and to reading instruction in particular.

2.   In the CRFPE, the training courses are not given by a body of specialists. An inspector-trainer may, it seems, teach one field one year and another the following year. However, this point requires verification.

3.   Changes in the Bologna system also concern Senegal. These changes are generating on-going adjustments for the training of teachers and supervisors. They could also be an opportunity to differentiate the available training, and encourage the development of research into the didactics of national and second-language instruction.

4.   No mention was made of the specific training of school principals, who play a central role in boosting education and the school's influence in neighbourhood and village life. Such training would support efforts to improve curricular alignment.

5.   The different educational and teaching projects in Senegal have resulted in the creation of many resources that are underused and that are simply waiting to be fully utilized.

6.   Resources appear to exist. The next step would be to list them and to identify the abilities that have been built up through experience and training. The purpose of this task would be to develop abilities centred on specific content.

7.   More diversified training programmes should be designed and nurtured to foster the development of a body of specialists. Monitoring does not require the same knowledge as the teaching of national languages and French.

8.   The inspectors have a specific role of steering and monitoring that is difficult to combine with a training role, where the focus of the relationship is on fostering learning.

9.   School principals should receive training to manage schools, and to plan the training of teachers in collaboration with the education and training inspectors and the academy inspectors.

part 3
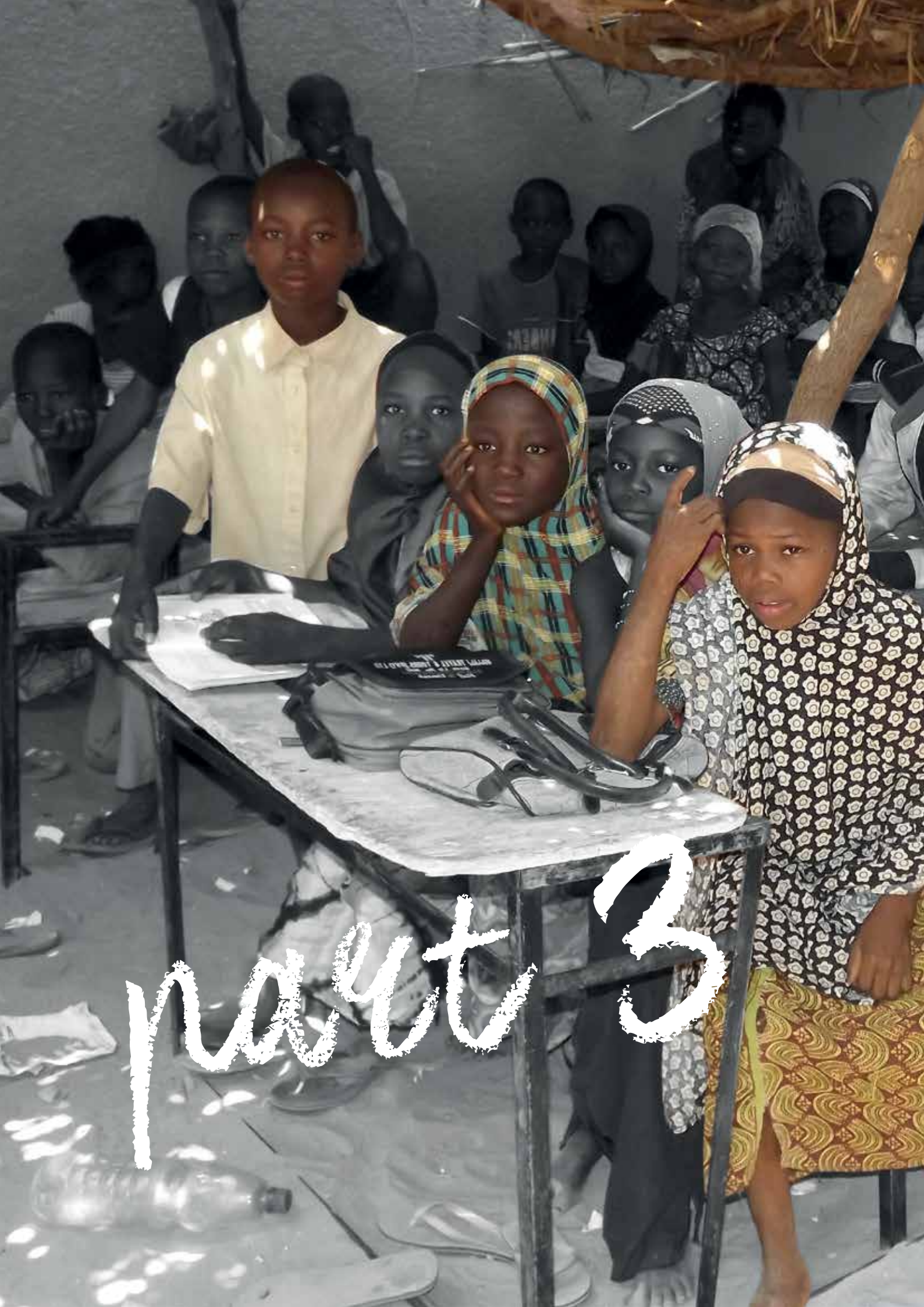
ANALYSIS OF READING LESSONS

1. GENERAL METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE AND GUIDELINES

The practice of reading instruction in the classroom needs to be analysed from a perspective that takes into account the multiple didactizations,[69] that this practice has undergone. The following presents the overall goals and objectives of reading instruction methodologies, as well as how methodologies are translated into syllabi and teaching materials, as a multi-layered process. The analysis of these layers will identify the content of reading instruction in the classroom. What is constructed in the classroom between the teacher and students is based on incorporated techniques brought to bear in a given activity before fading into the background as the lesson progresses. The nature of the teaching process is such that what is taught can only be understood *retrospectively*. Filming reading lessons is a way of capturing what is constructed and negotiated in the classroom.

The choice of filming *one* reading lesson in several classes requires some justification. The span of a lesson is preceded and followed by other lessons to form a cohesive whole that is linked to the disciplinary configuration in which reading instruction takes place. This whole is often validated by an assessment. Why choose to observe one single lesson? Each lesson defines an administrative span corresponding to a time slot, namely that of teaching periods and official schedules. This span is a unit that is familiar to school professionals. From the research point of view, it provides a useful snapshot of the content of reading instruction and what is constructed in class during a given time.

This snapshot must be situated in relation to what precedes and follows each lesson. It would have taken too long to film several lessons in succession, so, to include information beyond the scope of a single lesson, interviews were conducted with teachers before and after the filmed session. These interviews situate each lesson within a given framework. They clearly provide a different and more general perspective on the content of reading instruction, through teachers' descriptions of how they teach reading. Furthermore, the interviews provide information on what happened before and after each filmed lesson as well as on the teacher's lesson plan.

In choosing to film reading lessons in the first three grades of compulsory education in a different school each time, the aim is to obtain a snapshot of reading instruction in Senegal, Burkina Faso and Niger. This provides a basis to examine differences and similarities between what is taught in each country, in each grade, and to observe what progression is built up from one grade to the next.

Each of the chapters devoted to the analysis of the reading lessons presents an analysis by country, grade and, in a separate section, examines the progression from one grade to the next. These analyses take into account the dimensions already considered during the review of the curricular documents, namely the teaching of written culture, written and textual comprehension, the code and the workings of language, and multilingualism.

Before presenting the analyses, a few further brief methodological considerations are required.

69- Didactization refers to the way in which a content to be taught is translated or interpreted in syllabi, programmes, textbooks, student brochures and teaching systems; it also refers to the teaching traditions and practices involved in the interpretation made by the teachers of the knowledge to be taught when they plan out their teaching. The focus of teacher training in reading instruction since the independence of Senegal has not been analysed. This perspective on the question is nonetheless indispensable in order to understand how teachers currently work in the classroom. Training has shaped their conceptions and know-how.

2. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

A reading lesson was filmed in a number of schools that varied from one country to the next. In each school, a lesson in Grade 1 (CI for Senegal and Niger, CP1 for Burkina Faso) or Grade 2 (CP for Senegal and Niger, CP2 for Burkina Faso) or Grade 3 (CE1) was filmed. Interviews on the topic of reading instruction were systematically conducted with teachers before they gave the reading lesson that was recorded and immediately afterwards. The interviews were audio-recorded.

For each country a set of information about the schools and classes in which the information was gathered will be provided, specifying the region, the area, the main languages spoken, the class types, the grade, the size of the class and the school as well as the number of classes in each school, if this information is available.

How are the filmed lessons analysed? The aim of the exercise is to take stock of the content taught in each grade in the span of a single lesson. The lesson is marked by a beginning and an end. Between these two points, various reading instruction activities are conducted. They are organized hierarchically and articulated in relation to each other, at the same level or with some activities subordinated to others. These activities are constructed and negotiated with the students. They can be anticipated by the teacher and draw on routines that are not familiar to researchers. The activities do not give rise to a finished product. To give the most legible possible description of what is constructed in class, a compression technique is used in the analysis, based on the methodology of reduction, in order to produce a 'synopsis' (Schneuwly and Dolz, 2009, p. 79).

The compression of the research data applies to how the taught content is structured and hierarchically ordered. The researcher essentially compresses the content worked on in class, taking into account the form through which it is transmitted. The process, which necessarily has an interpretative dimension, is based on various indicators. The viewing of the video recordings brings to light a first set of verbal and nonverbal cues (mainly the parts of speech punctuating oral discourse), the social forms the classwork takes (collective, individual, group), and the didactic approach to the teaching content (methods, the teaching units included and the point of view on the content). A second set of cues serves to classify the activities conducted by students and teachers. This process is strongly determined by the media used in the teaching (texts, various writings, sentences, words, etc.). Reviewing how these media are used will provide a synopsis of what is said and done in the classroom.

The analysis follows the logic of what is constructed in the classroom and adopts a descriptive perspective guided by the content that is taught. The underlying assumption of this perspective is that the sequence of educational activities constitutes the dynamic principle of teaching. The activities culminate in a specific component or dimension of the lesson topic. They establish a material environment that in principle is conducive to the appropriation of this component or dimension of the subject by the students. They are developed through a series of actions and interactions, performed by the students individually, in interaction between the teacher and the students or between students.

The classroom activities can be identified in the video recordings. They may be differentiated in relation to how advanced the taught content is. The maintenance or introduction of teaching materials, or changes in how work is arranged (individual, group, etc.) in the classroom all provide information by which the activities can be identified. On this basis it becomes possible to establish a hierarchy and categorize them according to how much room they take up in the entire lesson.

How are the interviews analysed? Following each synopsis, the interviews[70] are analysed from the point of view of the content of the reading lessons. The analysis of the pre-lesson interview takes into account the method usually practised, the media used on a daily basis, the activities or exercises that are planned, activities or exercises done previously, or activities or exercises being repeated.

The post-lesson interview is brief. The analysis focuses on what the teacher says in relation to what was done in class, difficulties encountered by students and perceived by the teacher, and any changes that may have taken place with respect to what was planned.

3. THE PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

For each country, first an analysis of each of the three grades covered by the study (CI, CP and CE1, or CP, CE1, CE2 depending on the country) is presented, followed by the analysis of the progression that was observed.

For each grade, first some general information is provided regarding the type of school, the class sizes, teacher training and the teaching resources available. Then, to provide a snapshot of the content of reading instruction in each grade, the analysis of the reading lessons highlights different components organized into several sections. The first concerns written culture and the teaching materials used during the lesson; the second deals with how writing or texts are approached from the perspective of comprehension and communication; the third section focuses on the mastery of code and the final section looks at multilingualism.

One final remark: written culture and teaching materials are only considered from the point of view of what the students are exposed to students during the lesson. This means that the way the writing sample or text is presented to students (image, title, reference to the author, cutting up texts, etc.) is discussed in terms of the conception of writing students can construct from it. The materials used in the lessons are those selected by the teachers: these selections are simply noted in the initial interview, without further discussion of how they will be used in class.

70- Reminder: each interview conducted before filming contains questions on the general procedure of a reading lesson, on the language of instruction, the teaching materials and textbooks used, and the tasks and exercises usually assigned to students. The questions also address assessment and student difficulties. This interview 1 also provides pointers on the lesson that follows the interview, which will be filmed. The teachers are asked for details about their age, how many years they've been in the profession, and their initial and continuing training.
The interview that takes place after the filmed lesson, interview 2, contains questions that essentially focus on the lesson procedure, any difficulties encountered and the adjustments made during the lesson.

CHAPTER 8

ANALYSIS OF READING INSTRUCTION CONTENT IN BURKINA FASO

Table 1 lists information about the schools in Burkina Faso selected for the study. This table specifies the areas in which the schools are located, the main languages spoken, the class types, the grades, class sizes and the number of classes in each school.

Class	Area/Languages spoken	Type of class	Grade observed/ Group size	Student numbers	Number of classes
1.	Urban/Mooré	Standard private	Grade 1/ 194 students	30 B=18 G=12	6 classes
2.	Rural/ Mooré	Bilingual ELAN	Grade 1/ 135 students	42	5 classes
3.	Peri-urban/ Mooré	Standard public/ Bambini experience	Grade 2/ 156 students	30 B=13 G=17	5 classes
4.	Rural/Mooré	Standard public	Grade 2/ 100 students	50 B=29 G=21	2 classes
5.	Peri-urban/ Mooré	Standard public	Grade 3/ 541 students	95 B=44 G=51	6 classes
6.	Urban/Mooré	Standard public/ Interactive pedagogy	Grade 3/ 500 students	50 B=27 G=23	8 classes
7.	Peri-urban/ Mooré	Bilingual public	3rd year/	36	

Table 8.1: Data on schools and classrooms where reading lessons were observed

The data analysed in this section are drawn from observations of reading lessons in a limited number of classes, selected according to the following three criteria:

1- School grades (Grade 1, Grade 2 and Grade 3 of compulsory education);
2- School zones (evenly distributed between urban, peri-urban or rural);
3- Language of instruction (choice of so-called 'standard' classes in which French is the language of instruction, bilingual 'standard' classes (MEBA/OSEO)[71] in which national languages and French are taught) and an ELAN class in which reading instruction is exclusively in the national language in Grade 1.

The seven[72] classes selected in Burkina Faso are distributed as follows: two Grade 1 classes, two Grade 2 classes, two Grade 3 classes, and one Grade 3 standard bilingual class. The results of the analysis are initially presented by grade: Grade 1, Grade 2 and Grade 3, the latter corresponding to the third year of bilingual education.

71- Bilingual education has been conducted as an action research experiment in Burkina Faso since 1994 thanks to the partnership between the Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy (MEBA) and the Oeuvre Suisse d'Entraide Ouvrière (OSEO), now known as Solidar Suisse. This is an innovation in the shape of a reform that encompasses all aspects of the education system. For the purposes of this analysis, the focus is placed on elements related to the question of reading and writing (Yameogo, 2014).

72- The eighth class is a pre-school class (see report by I. Leopoldoff Martin) that is not taken into account in the detailed analysis of teaching practices by grades, as this analysis focuses on Grade 1, Grade 2 and Grade 3.

1. ANALYSIS OF READING INSTRUCTION BY GRADES

LESSONS IN GRADE 1

Grade 1 lessons were filmed in two classes, one an ELAN bilingual class, located in a rural area, and the other in an urban area, in a private institution, following the standard programme. Class sizes ranged between 30 and 42 students (some students in the bilingual ELAN class were not five years old). In the ELAN bilingual class, reading instruction is done exclusively in the national language during the first year [73]. The teacher had been teaching a standard bilingual class since 2003 and therefore had solid experience in the field. He had attended a 10-day training course[74] to teach according to the ELAN method and use the materials that go with it. He considered that his students were making satisfactory progress. Five sessions are devoted to a reading lesson in the ELAN classroom:

1- Decoding.
2- Vocabulary.
3- Comprehension (developing of critical thinking).
4- Guided Reading.
5- Guided writing (in three phases), in which students are asked to provide some ideas based on a chosen theme and then write in small groups, followed by a final 'post-writing' phase during which every group reads its written production. Students choose the best production. The group whose text has been selected write it on the blackboard.

The teacher points out that even if everything is student-centred to solicit participation, the student book in the ELAN method does not contain real texts. The work is done mainly on texts produced by students. In the teacher's view, the reading materials should be more varied. Consequently, he occasionally composes small texts on the board to have students identify common words. As it happens, in the filmed lesson, the teacher uses the textbook, which proposes to work on a key sentence written out on the blackboard, also following the methodology prescribed for French instruction. The teacher mentioned the lack of media and of illustrations in particular. During the lesson, the teacher also wrote up the letters of the alphabet on the blackboard, but this raises the question of the durability of the elements on the blackboard, as the letters of the alphabet cannot be learned in one week by students and therefore should remain displayed in the classroom environment (on the blackboard if there is no possibility of using paper posters).

The lesson observed in the ELAN bilingual class lasts 42 minutes. It is on the first reading session, entitled 'decoding', and comes before a session devoted to vocabulary. During the lesson, the teacher points out

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73- At the time of the research, the ELAN experiment was only in its first year. According to projections, instruction in the ELAN classes is expected to progress as follows:
Languages of instruction:
- 1st year: 90 per cent Mooré/10 per cent French.
- 2nd year: 80 per cent Mooré/20 per cent French.
- 3rd year (called the transfer year): 50 per cent Mooré/50 per cent French.
- 4th year: 20 per cent Mooré/80per cent French.
- 5th year: 10 per cent Mooré/90 per cent French.

74- An additional training course was scheduled for 24 March but did not take place.

the students' difficulty identifying common words, which are not yet mastered in writing. Knowledge of the letters is not a problem – the students know the letters but they struggle to form consonant-vowel combinations. A large portion of the classwork is done orally even if writing is still present, through words to be deciphered and copied by students on their slates. The teacher would prefer to devote more time to learning and to practise other reading games with the sentences from the day's lesson. He would like the children to have time to discover the sentence by themselves, but this is not possible. The question of the pace of learning is raised, especially as some children in the class are only 5 years old.

In the second conventional Grade 1 class in a private school (fees of € 150 per year), instruction is exclusively in French. Most students are from the neighbouring area, which is not the case for the teachers. The teachers are from different ethnic groups and some are not proficient in Mooré. The primary language spoken at school is French. The children who arrive at primary level speak French because they have already spent at least two, if not three years, in the school's preschool section (a three-year preschool system with 30 students per class). The teacher believes that the level of French is good in her class because the children speak French at home. Nonetheless, three to five students are struggling with reading. Reading games, consisting of syllabifying problem words, are proposed to address the difficulties. In this school, lessons are exclusively in French. All the students have a reading book, a copybook, a slate and a little stick they use to follow reading word by word.

The reading lesson takes place every day, three times a day, with each session lasting 30 minutes. Currently the letter 'j' is being studied based on the textbook *Lire au Burkina, CP1* (Reading in Burkina, Grade 1, p. 60). Lesson 23 of the textbook is entitled 'Julie a une jolie jupe' (Julie has a pretty skirt). The observed lesson corresponds to the first session of the second day, according to the methodology of the textbook and the associated preparation sheets. The teacher says that she follows the instructions on the worksheets provided to her by the principal to organize her lesson and as a reading methodology (published by the Ministry). There is one sheet per lesson. Assessment focuses on the correct spelling of the words being learned: the word is written on the board, spelled out and then separated into syllables; next the word is wiped off the board and students must write it on their slates. The teacher anticipates difficult words and explains them to the students (e.g. *une jarre*, an earthenware jar). She makes sure that the students understand the meaning of the words by drawing objects on the board, but does not pay attention to the meaning of the sentence. The most common exercises are reading games. The reading lesson is always followed by the writing lesson: the link between the two is the letter studied during reading, which will later be written, and then writing focuses on copying words that contain this letter.

Initiation into written culture in Grade 1 (CP1)

In the two observed lessons in Grade 1, there is barely any presence of elements related to written culture. Indeed, the teaching is based on the reading textbook both in French (*Lire au Burkina, CP1*) and in the national language (*Kelge! Mam banga kaorengo! Gese! Mam banga gulsgo*[75]). There is no reference to other reading materials or extracurricular reading practices. It is true that the work on the key sentence hardly lends itself to it: the supplementary contributions made by teachers are primarily thematic and referential.

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75- ELAN textbook in Mooré: *Kelge! Mam banga kaorengo! Gese! Mam banga gulsgo*, which translates as Listen! I can read! Look! I can write!

Comprehension in Grade 1

The work on comprehension is fundamentally determined by the possibilities offered by the textbook (key sentence, words and series of sentences). Depending on the different sessions, this work is devoted more exclusively to decoding or comprehension.

In the standard Grade 1 class observed, the essentially oral approach consists of reading aloud the double page of the Grade 1 textbook *Lire au Burkina*. First it is read by the teacher and then by the students. This linear exercise of reading aloud without interruption in lesson 23 of the textbook is less to do with understanding a text than sounding it out. The reader does not say what he or she has understood from the text but focuses on what he or she sees and reads, aloud or silently, word by word, syllable by syllable, depending on the different sections of the textbook.

In the case of ELAN bilingual instruction in Mooré, the exercise is, first, to read aloud a series of sentences, and, second, to read the sentence of the day. The work is modelled on the methodology proposed for teaching French: contextualization through a discussion that enables students to formulate the sentence of the day 'Voici mon chien, il aime jouer' (This is my dog, he likes to play); reading/deciphering the sentence of the day. Therefore, the working unit is the sentence, deciphered word by word. The examination of the context, which precedes the identification of words, follows the reading of 'Voici mon chien, il aime jouer', the teacher encouraging the students to make suggestions before deciphering the last word. After reading everything, students do a comprehension exercise (what does the dog like?), and punctuation is highlighted – use of the comma and the full stop. The attention paid to deciphering the sentence clearly draws on contextual and semantic strategies in the sense that it seeks to show students ways of deciphering words when learning to read.

Decoding in Grade 1

The work done in Grade 1, both in French and Mooré, concentrates on decoding. The decoding activities closely follow to the different phases of the teaching sequence. In the case of the observed lessons, these were:

1- Reading aloud following the model provided by the teacher: this activity occurs at the end of the lesson and is based on the double page of the textbook; or, to remind students of what they did in the previous lesson, it contains a sequence of sentences. Reading aloud remains strongly present in the lessons throughout the first three years.

2- Spelling words from the lesson: the spelling is done by letters and sounds, e.g. 'je', 'u', 'le', 'i', and 'e'; the aim therefore is to spell out the letters making up the studied word.

3- Identifying words from the lesson on the blackboard: this is a visual discrimination task.

4- Reading discovery/deciphering: this is a collective activity conducted in Mooré where the aim is for the students to decipher the sentence of the day. For this task, teachers use a variety of strategies: a reminder of a letter, the letter 'A', used by students to write their first names and displayed on the board; tracking of known elements (the word for dog 'baaga'); deciphering letter by letter; association of letters by syllable and then by word. At this stage of learning, students have difficulty associating two letters (phonemic blending, syllabic blending).

CHAPTER 8

Synthesis of Grade 1

In all the observed classes, the teachers demonstrate great skill in managing large groups as well as in transposing elements from the lesson onto the blackboard, including, as noted in the interviews, images that are incorporated in the lessons. However, the different textbooks used in both standard instruction or in bilingual instruction are limited, especially in terms of the diversity of the text types available. In fact, while the textbooks allow for contact with writing and for the study of various dimensions of writing, they do not suffice to build a written culture. Similarly, the key sentence appears to be a limited medium to work on reading comprehension. It is also worth pointing out the omnipresence of read-alouds that stick exactly to the text (in fact to the textbook) without any reference to comprehension, especially the reading of the double page of the textbook. This is undoubtedly one of the consequences of the emphasis placed on fluent reading in the methodology. It would therefore be useful to target passages in the textbook that are used for this reading exercise, a sentence or a series of sentences for example, and to separate them from analysis and syllable segmentation activities.

There is a systematic and regular quality to the activities involved in learning the code, that is certainly positive when it comes to teaching and learning a technical subject matter. Although it was not possible to fully observe the approach used to teach decoding due to the limited time frame, the writing on the blackboard shows that it starts from the key sentence, which is segmented into words, then into syllables, and finally into letters/sounds. In this approach, particular attention is given to words, their pronunciation and their meaning (as decoding cannot occur without understanding the word).

Figure 8.1: Synthesis activity: letter association, consonant + vowel

This systematic and regular quality can and must lead on to activities in which students are active, for example giving them time to decipher a sentence or the words of a sentence, as was done in Mooré. This kind of activity involves a metalinguistic reflection on what steps are necessary to decipher a word and what resources are at hand, leading to cognitive clarity regarding the purposes of tasks.
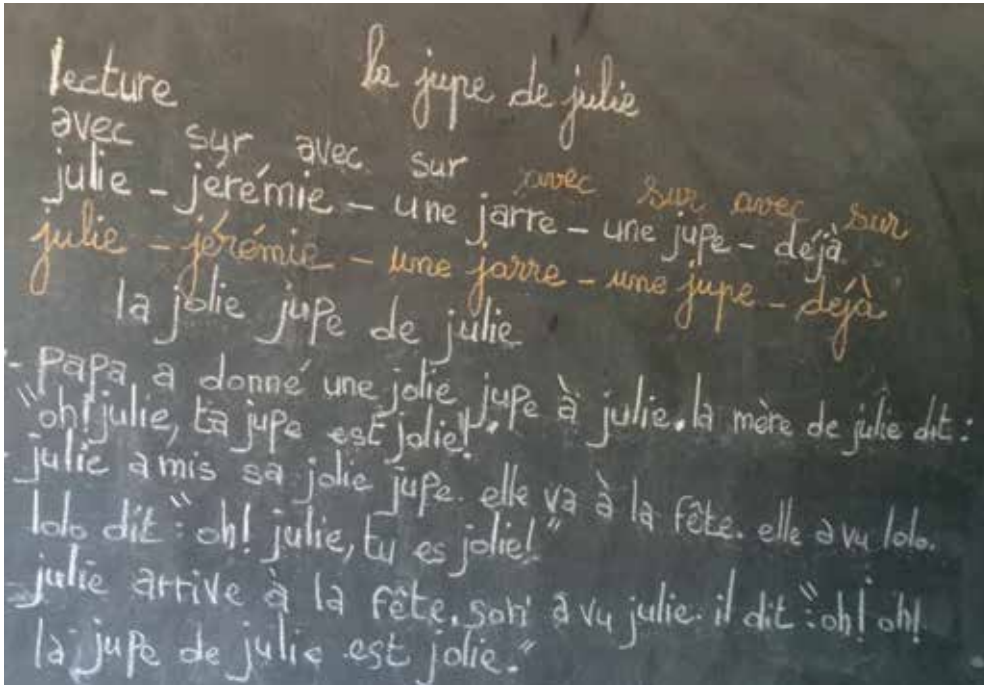

Figure 8.2: Work on the key sentence and reading activities

Figure 8.3: Correspondence table for synthesising activities

CHAPTER 8

LESSON ANALYSIS IN GRADE 2

The recordings of the Grade 2 lessons took place in two classes practising standard French instruction, one located in a peri-urban area, that benefitted from the experience of the NGO Bambini nel Deserto with a class of 30 students, the other, in a rural area, in a two-classroom school with 50 students in the Grade 2 class. Where the class in the rural area is concerned, it should be noted that students are drawn from a 5-kilometre radius, that there is no well nearby, nor any canteen this year (second and third terms) and that the rice intended for the school lunch had not been delivered.

The textbook used in both classes is *Lire au Burkina, CP2* (Reading in Burkina, Grade 2). In the peri-urban class, the teacher received specific training for the educational project proposed by the NGO Bambini nel Deserto, which published two interactive exercise books for learning reading and writing in Grade 1 and Grade 2: *Cahiers interactifs pour l'apprentissage de la lecture et de l'écriture au CP1 et au CP2*. Although the project has its own materials, it is the official textbook that is used during the filmed lesson. In the rural school, the school principal received training in reading instruction based on the principles of differentiation (group-based pedagogy). The two teachers in the rural school (the principal, who teaches Grade 3, along with one other teacher who is in charge of Grade 2) are from different ethnic groups (Peul and Bobo); they speak French with the students and collaborate in their practices, even if the approach to reading differs between Grade 2 and Grade 3. The language of instruction is French, but they both use Mooré during their lessons (sometimes the teacher translates the story they will read, into Mooré, a practice that also occurs in Grade 4 or even up to Grade 6). A shift in the methodology takes place in Grade 3 (limited use of illustrations, no exercises on sounds, but work on comprehension of texts). The level in French, particularly in reading, is considered satisfactory. Reading is seen as the key to all other disciplines. The problems experienced by struggling students can be traced to a variety of causes: cognitive issues due to early childhood illness (meningitis or other), or absenteeism and enrolment below the normal school age (4-5 years). The school is not equipped with a library.

In the peri-urban Grade 2 class, the filmed lesson lasted 39 minutes. The classwork was done using the textbook *Livre de lecture, 2ème année* (Grade 2 Reading Book), the blackboard, upon which the text was partially reproduced, individual slates and large slates were used. It should be noted that the teacher brought a camera to class to contextualise lesson 12 on page 34 of the Grade 2 textbook, entitled 'Fofana fait des photos' (Fofana takes photos). For the second reading lesson, filmed in a rural Grade 2 class, the students work in groups of five on large slates[76]. The text they are reading in class is copied out on the slate and read by the group. One student is responsible for making a note of the words they had difficulty with. Then all the students write out the words they had problems reading on their individual slates. Each student has his or her own reading book. To assess the students' reading ability, the lesson focuses on their comprehension of the text (which too frequently is read without being understood, according to teachers) and their attention to punctuation, which favours comprehension (expressive reading in Grade 4).

76- To facilitate the process of learning reading, the school principal promoted the use of peer reading groups (groups of five), formed by evenly distributing advanced students and students struggling with reading, while taking into account whether students get on with each other or not.

Initiation into written culture in Grade 2

In the two lessons observed in Grade 2, the culture-related dimensions of writing are hardly present. Instruction is based on the textbook *Lire au Burkina, CP2*. The contextualizing phase is essentially a motivation phase designed to elicit references from the students' everyday context, for example in relation to using a camera, which is linked to the key sentence of the lesson: 'Fofana takes photos'. However, this activity is insufficient, from the point of view of literary practices, given that the Grade 2 textbook, just like the Grade 1 textbook, remains particularly limited with regard to materials that use sentences as a starting point to develop activities on decoding.

Comprehension in Grade 2

The work of contextualisation and motivation is based on the key sentence. To ensure that students understand the key sentence, teachers explain it clearly or even show objects from the world to which it refers, sometimes through the use of mime ('Fofana takes photos', 'The children are on break').

Decoding in Grade 2

Like in Grade 1, reading instruction in Grade 2 is essentially focused on decoding and follows the same methodological approach, taking a sentence as the starting point and then segmenting it into words, syllables and letters/sounds. The nature of the smallest unit is different, however, since it is no longer one letter/sound as in Grade 1 but, more often, a group of letters, for example the equivalence between the graphemes f and ph that is addressed in the Grade 2 lessons, or work on related sounds – /ion/ and /sion/ and /tion/ – in the other class. The specificity of these work units is discussed in the interview with the teachers and raises the question of the possible division into smaller – oral – units, which is not done in class, as the chosen unit in both of the observed cases is a written unit (tion/sion or f/ph).

A new element in the progression seems to be introduced in Grade 2: alternating between reading and writing operations. Indeed, on several occasions, teachers ask students to write previously spelled words on their slates. Quite clearly, the writing exercises reinforce knowledge of the letters, how they are drawn, and the need to place letters and graphemes in a given order.

Most of the activities focus on the word unit. One single activity, that of tracking sounds, focuses on auditory discrimination. It should be noted that this activity concerns a larger unit than the phoneme. Furthermore, no phonological activity features in the observed lessons. This implies that the students are considered to have identified the sound if they are able to propose words in which it is contained. No syllabic blending activity has been directly observed, even though the writing displayed on the blackboard suggests that such activities are practised. Indeed, as pointed out by the teacher, it is impossible to do syllabic blending exercises on a compound such as /tion/.

In the case of the observed lessons, the proposed activities include work on phrasal units (1), lexical units (2, 3, 4), lexical and infralexical units (5, 6, 7), and infralexical units (8):

1- Reading aloud/sounding of the key sentence after spelling the words in the sentence, which the teacher writes up on the board in front of students ('Fofana takes photos');

2- The identification of words from the lesson on the board, which can be considered as a visual discrimination activity;

3- Writing/copying words onto the board and onto the slate to focus on the units from which they are made, i.e. letters;

4- Reading words and syllabification on the blackboard;

5- Spelling words, generally the words of the lesson;

6- Tracking grapheme-phoneme correspondence within a word (e.g. the equivalence between /f/ and /ph/ in 'Fofana' and 'photo') and comparison between two graphemes, the monograph /f/ and the digraph /ph/. It should be noted that this equivalence is discovered exclusively through syllabification, by segmenting into smaller and smaller units: word, syllable, grapheme and letter;

7- Copying or writing out infralexical units (e.g. /tion/, /ph/);

8- Tracking sounds (in this case, the sound /tion/).

Simply listing the activities therefore demonstrates that to a large extent students work on lexical units that concentrate orthographic or phonological difficulties, sometimes in the form of small sentence sequences (see Figure 8.2).

Synthesis in Grade 2

In Grade 2, the reading instruction lessons continue the work on decoding initiated in Grade 1, in the sense that the starting point is always the key sentence. However, there is a noticeable change in the nature of the unit involved, which is no longer that of the letter/sound (grapheme monograph), to which digraphs could be added ('ph' for example, and equivalences such as f/ph) or trigrams (eau), but instead that of related sounds (e.g. /ion/ or /sion/). This introduces one further element to be mastered in the presentation of the system as well as in its comprehension by the students, as it takes on a more orthographic emphasis (-ion, -tion, -sion) and also becomes more demanding in terms of phonological distinctions.

In Grade 2, a more systemic approach is taken to the work on decoding, with the introduction of equivalences and digraphs, which are necessary to master the system of graphophonemic correspondence in French. However, this approach also tends to more strongly emphasize orthography in explaining certain particularities (sion, tion). The work on decoding is presented as a reinforced version of the synthetic method, illustrated by the use of syllabification, on the basis of a corpus of words presenting spelling difficulties. In this sense, students who are still not very proficient in blending may feel lost in lessons that are essentially designed to expand vocabulary and reinforce spelling. One finds orientations of this kind in the teaching practices of francophone countries, in which there is a clear shift in reading instruction after the first two years (Thévenaz-Christen et al., 2004).

LESSON ANALYSIS IN GRADE 3

The recordings of the Grade 3 lessons took place in three classes, two of which applied standard instruction and one bilingual instruction, located in peri-urban and urban environments. Student numbers vary from 36 in the bilingual class (peri-urban area) to 50 (peri-urban area) and 95 (urban area) in the other two classes.

One of the large Grade 3 classes observed, is part of a particularly busy urban school attended by over 550 students divided into 8 classes: Grade 1 = 97, Grade 2 = 94, Grade 3 = 95, Grade 4 = 88, Grade 5 = 95, Grade 6 = 72. The teacher has taught there since 2001, which demonstrates loyalty to the institution. This loyalty was confirmed by the principal, who, moreover, mentioned how motivated the teachers are to follow the students from Grade 1 to Grade 6. The majority language among students is Mooré and teachers readily use this language to help them understand certain concepts, even up to Grade 5 and Grade 6. The results in French are good overall, even if, obviously it is difficult to monitor everyone when there are in excess of 90 students in the classroom. In this class, the observed lesson lasts 40 minutes. The textbook is *Lire au Burkina* 3ème année (Reading in Burkina, year 3), the lesson being based on the text 'Plantons des arbres' (Let's plant trees) on page 92. Each student has a reading book and a slate. The teacher uses the blackboard.

The other class equivalent to Grade 3 is a year 3 bilingual class located in a peri-urban area. The reading lesson lasts 54 minutes. It was conducted exclusively in French and based on pages 90-91 of the official 4th-year reading book *Karim and Aïssa*. The title of the text students read is: 'Un jeu dangereux' (A dangerous game).

Finally, the third Grade 3 class observed is located in a peri-urban setting. There are many schools nearby. 550 students are enrolled at the school, which is divided into eight classes (Grade 3 and Grade 6 are doubled). The school is dynamic and organizes 'critical fortnights' where teachers speak about difficulties experienced in class. The majority of students comes from the area, whereas the teachers do not. The main language spoken by students is Mooré, which is not the case of the teacher in the study, who nevertheless uses this language in his lessons to facilitate the comprehension of certain concepts. The teacher took over the class from Grade 2 because whoever was teaching them in Grade 1, the previous year, hadn't been able to manage. The class finished the Grade 2 programme at the end of the 2nd term. It has therefore just started the Grade 3 programme. According to the teacher's explanations during the interview, twenty students out of a total of fifty are struggling in reading, even in terms of decoding. Those who were already managing the year before have improved, but those who were really in trouble when the teacher took over the class are continuing to struggle in Grade 3. Gaps in their learning have persisted since Grade 1. The teacher has undergone specific training in reading instruction, in the framework of the PAMEB[77] project. This has influenced his teaching, as can be observed in the recorded lesson, which lasts two and a half hours. Two teachers in this school have undergone this training. This experimental approach has, however, remained limited to just a few schools in the area, even though the project has given rise to the publication of a guide (MEBA 2010) on an interactive pedagogy for reading instruction, albeit one that was never fully distributed on the national level.

The method was tested by the teacher who continues to use it in his lessons. It was also presented during an educational conference.

A reading lesson usually involves the following steps: students are given a reminder of the text they last read, then they discover a new text through questions, silent reading comprehension questions, an exploratory reading (the teacher has the students read to identify difficult words), words are written on the board, the teacher explains the difficult words, reverting to the local language if necessary, the teacher reads the text aloud, individual reading (students read aloud by paragraph) – during this phase, there can be reading games based on items previously studied in grammar, vocabulary and conjugation – and to conclude, a final reading is done by the teacher or a good reader. Reading revolves around a theme and this year's themes include: the school, the garden, and games, which has just been addressed. The goal is to achieve reading fluency, as well as to work on oral and written expression. All sub-disciplines studied in French are related to the topics of the prescribed texts.

The specificity of the PAMEB approach, as observed, lies in the fact that the work is always text-based. As it happens, the lesson presented involves a narrative text, a story entitled *Le mur de miel* (The Honey Wall), which is part of the official Grade 3 textbook (this text is presented in this report, in the chapter devoted to Burkina Faso). As mentioned above, each student is supposed to have a textbook, but it is not replaced when worn out. Homework to be done in French is given daily for grammar, written expression, and vocabulary. It is nonetheless difficult to ask students to do reading work at home, as the reading books are often in very poor condition and the children are not able to take them home. Alongside this work on the texts of the reading book, the teacher reads or tells stories to students once a week. Depending on the situation, he makes up stories, which serve as a basis for the moral lesson. However, the teacher explains that sometimes the texts in the book are not suitable for reading instruction as they are too long, with ambiguous sentences. The texts should be better adapted to the children's everyday lives. In this respect, the teacher believes that it would be useful to have training on the nature of the texts. Starting from the texts, the teacher adapts the language level so that the students can understand what he is telling them in French. He also recognizes that a general idea can be explained in Mooré to facilitate comprehension. In his view, there is clearly scope to initiate students into written culture in Grade 3, on the basis of materials drawn from the reading manual and other books of Burkina Faso stories, from which the teacher chooses freely, depending on the texts he wishes to work on. The teacher distinguishes as follows between the different types of text that the reading manual contains:

- Explanatory texts.
- Narrative texts.
- Descriptive texts.
- Rhetorical texts.

For now, he does not spend time on these distinctions with Grade 3 students. It is when working on writing in Grade 4 that he usually introduces the question of text genres and their specific characteristics. When he has more advanced grades, he also includes newspapers. Moreover, he uses the comic strips that are in the reading manual. In this way, the teacher proposes a variety of reading and writing situations and for instance has maintained a regular correspondence between his class and class in France, centred on specific themes.

The text therefore seems to be the starting point of his teaching. He stresses the need to provide a key sentence taken from a text in order to facilitate comprehension. Regarding the teaching of comprehension, he has his students work in small groups to answer questions on the text, having them go back to the text when they can't find an answer. For this activity, he uses individual slates and large slates, as already seen in previous grades. The most common reading-related exercises are on vocabulary, and on oral and written expression (rebuilding texts with sentences formulated orally). The students' reading abilities undergo quarterly and summative assessment, in accordance with the official method: the assessment encompasses all the texts read during the term (students pick out pieces of paper on which the titles of the texts are written). Students are assessed on the basis of the 'fluent' reading of the text and the consistency of their answers to comprehension questions based on the text. To achieve good progress in reading, the teacher believes it is essential to work on comprehension because the students learn to decode without necessarily always understanding what they are reading. The teacher's goal, for now, is for all the students to achieve reading fluency (proficiency in decoding even without comprehension), and more particularly in this end of the year in Grade 3, for all students to be able to read and understand what they are reading.

Initiation into written culture in Grade 3 (CE1)

In Grade 3, a stronger emphasis is placed on the initiation into written culture in the class, starting with the narrative text genre of the story, which is well represented in the third-year reading manual. In this respect, it is not so much the medium that matters, but how it is presented to the students and the explicit way in which its textual and generic dimensions, and their links to social practices, are brought to attention (for example, the teacher has students establish a link between the story read in class and the tales told by their elders, grandfathers and grandmothers, which he asks the children to relate, irrespective of the language in which they choose to do so – French or Mooré). At the end of the lesson, the teacher asks the students what they liked about the story – the students' enjoyment of the story is evident at different moments of the lesson, through their mischievous looks and laughter. He points out the fictional nature of the story, introducing textual concepts such as characters – the animals talk – and morality. He himself tells a more personal story, providing a model for an oral exercise in the form of a recitation of stories by students. Two of them volunteer to speak: the first in Mooré – he warns the teacher that he can't do it in French – and his story is hugely appreciated by the audience; the second student is more proficient French and so tells his story in French. In this way, the teacher establishes a rich environment for literacy in which the textual approach, far from excluding national languages, serves to build bridges between French and these languages in the framework of language practices specific to the context of Burkina Faso.

Reading comprehension

Comprehension is, according to all the teachers interviewed, the primary purpose of reading lessons in Grade 3. This is demonstrated in the organization of the lessons and in the continuation of some activities at different levels (activities marked with an asterisk feature in several classes):

    1- The emphasis on the contextualization of the text, which nonetheless oscillates between a thematic approach and a textual or generic approach; *

2- The nature of the texts, in particular the stories (or even the explanatory texts or poems), which favours a textual approach that involves a reflection on the purpose of the texts beyond simply moralizing, as the narratives generate a textual macrostructure; *

3- The practice of individual silent reading introduced in Grade 3, followed by comprehension questions; *

4- Expressive reading aloud by the teacher, which provides students with an initial understanding of the text; *

5- The response to reading questions, as encountered for instance when the class is divided into subgroups working on large slates, an activity that serves as a basis for oral interaction between students (true-false type questions, answering questions written on the blackboard and requiring students to make inferences, in the sense that not all the answers are to be found in the text but must be inferred); *

6- Miming and staging of comprehension of the text by several students;

7- A reminder of the characters and the story to bring out the macrostructure of the text;

8- Explanation of difficult words in the text.

The analysis of the activities thus brings to light two main challenges in terms of the work on comprehension:

- The challenge represented by the work on units larger than lexical units: the purpose of the text, the macrostructure of the text, the characters, the inferences to be made from the information in the text and the reader's knowledge (e.g. to answer a question such as 'Are the hare and the hyena always good friends?' after reading the story, *Le mur de miel*).

- The challenge of choosing texts adapted to the students' abilities in terms of deciphering and the comprehension of expressions. In this respect, the choices made during the PAMEB experiment aim for a more exhaustive approach in terms of comprehension while working on a limited number of texts adapted to the students.

Decoding in Grade 3

In Grade 3, learning the code is relegated to the background, the students no longer do systematic work on correspondences. However, it does come into play in connection with the vocabulary work on difficult words. The teachers highlight the words that students struggle with when reading aloud. This lexical work involves several tasks:

1- Work on pronunciation related to orthographic features (e.g. 'gourmandise') or the non-pronunciation of silent letters (e.g. the p of 'galop'), giving rise to repetition exercises in class; *

2- The explanation of difficult words and their subsequent reformulation to aid the comprehension of the text, the words being chosen by either the teacher or the students; *

3- The spelling of words and their syllabification with a view to reinforcing phonographic correspondence and orthographic memorization, through spelling exercises (e.g. 'brouteront'[78], 'heureux', 'désert', 'protéger') ;

4- Writing out words on the slates, whether previously spelled by students or not, along with their corrections.

The work on the text, as proposed in Grade 3, also connects to the sub-disciplines of French, and in one of the observed classes it touches on conjugation.

78- In this case, this word also provides the opportunity to work a conjugation point by having the students recognize the tense of the verb 'brouteront'.

Synthesis in Grade 3

The Grade 3 teachers adopt an approach to the text that somehow seems to call for a diversification of practices: alternation between reading and writing activities (already quite strongly present in Grade 2), or division of the class into subgroups working on large slates, which demonstrates the teacher's proficiency in dealing with large groups.

However, some texts seem to be more conducive than others to an approach that is embedded in complex language practices. From this point of view, it would be useful to establish an inventory of texts suitable for such work, in particular those in the textbook (see the proposals of the PAMEB Project, 2010). This selection would undoubtedly ease the burden of teachers faced with the difficult task of providing continuous reading instruction.

2. ANALYSIS OF PROGRESSION

The analysis of the teaching practices in the observed classes points to two configurations, as already outlined in the analysis of the syllabi and teaching materials.

An initial configuration is found in Grade 1 and Grade 2, in which the starting point of instruction is the sentence as proposed by the textbook. In this approach, the textbook is insufficient on its own, despite the teachers' efforts to initiate students into written culture and help them understand what it means. Work on decoding dominates, and being proficient in decoding seems to be a necessary precondition before introducing texts, however simple they may be. Decoding activities are essentially segmenting activities, from sentence to word, then to syllable and finally to letter/sound. Syllabic blending is seldom encountered and rarely practised in the lessons observed. As for phonological awareness activities, they are limited to having students track words in which the studied sound can be heard. An increase in complexity is evident in the units of the code students work on in Grade 2, for instance with certain linked sounds specific to French certainly causing problems for students, but also for teachers, and perhaps exceeding the parameters of reading instruction.

A second configuration appears in Grade 3, in which the text is taken as the starting point and goal. The texts are drawn from the textbook and some certainly function as building blocks in the construction of a written culture. The orientation here is potentially textual, even if there is always a possibility that the texts may simply be read aloud expressively without students understanding them.
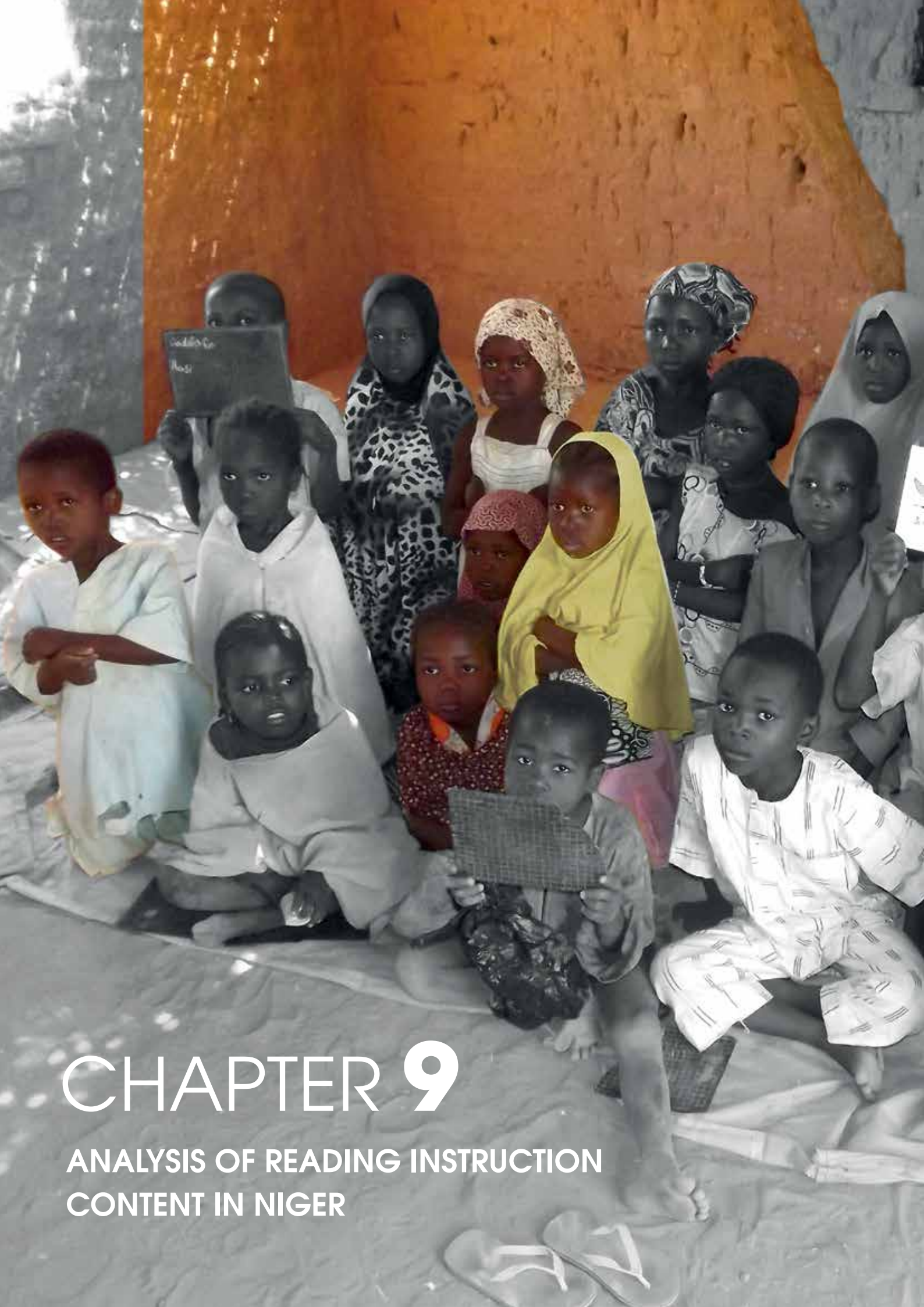
CHAPTER 8

3. CONCLUDING REMARKS

WHAT HAS BEEN LEARNED

1- The observed teachers are expert teachers who in most cases have been practising for at least a decade. They are all proficient in the use of the blackboard, onto which they copy in precise detail the lessons to be worked on while complementing them with illustrations. They are also proficient in alternating between reading activities done by students and writing activities on the slates, to make the students more aware of how letters function as graphic units to be arranged in a sequential order. The use of large slates in interactive or group teaching is a good way to diversify activities while promoting interaction between students.

2- In practice, the recourse to Mooré occurs punctually during vocabulary explanations; it also appears later, in Grade 3, in relation to text-based instruction on genres. From this point of view, one may consider that a text- and genre-based approach can act as a way of fostering dialogue between languages and cultures within the school, facilitating student progress.

3- Decoding predominates in the reading instruction dispensed in Grade 1 and Grade 2; it is based on segmenting (key sentence to word, then to syllable and finally to letter/sound), which is what one essentially observes in practice; syllabic blending, which is recommended in the textbook, is less observed in practice and should not be confused with sounding out the textbook's letter of the day, to be studied through memorization and repetition; at the phonological level, the work is limited to tracking sounds.

4- In Grade 1 and Grade 2, the teaching of decoding follows the official methodology, which attaches great importance to the activities based on the analysis of the key sentence. This activities-based approach tends to blur the issues at stake in the lesson, which are not simply limited to reading a given sentence aloud, but also involve becoming aware of a new element of the written language system of French that is to be learned.

5- The phoneme – sound – deserves special attention and must be distinguished from the letter, especially in spelling. To ensure this is the case, it would be advisable to avoid pronouncing the 'e' after the consonant ('te' for /t/) when the teacher wishes to highlight the corresponding sound with a view to blending two phonemes to form one syllable.

6- Work on reading comprehension is introduced in Grade 3, or more precisely as soon as the teacher works with the Grade 3 textbook. It is undeniably facilitated by certain texts considered as better adapted for extensive and diversified activities. There have already been proposals to change the Grade 3 textbook along these lines (MENA 2010).

7- In Grade 3, the work on decoding essentially takes an orthographic approach, focusing on words that are difficult to pronounce, understand and spell. This systematic work is likely to disconcert students who have not yet mastered decoding (this is also the case of French-speaking Swiss students or French students who are not proficient in deciphering by the end of the first year of school and the beginning of the second).

KEY POINTS

1. The strict and exclusive teaching of the code in the first two years of primary school may make it difficult for students to perceive the purpose of reading, its nature and what its represents in terms of learning. It would be desirable to actually confront students with elements of written culture from when they first enter school, by means of books, collections of stories and various texts, some of which would be read by the teacher, in French as well as in national languages, so as to facilitate their comprehension by students. What matters here is not the quantity but the quality of the selected texts (simple and within students' abilities) and the discussion of these texts.

2. Developing interactions between reading and writing helps students to understand the alphabetic principle, from the early stages of learning to read.

3. Doing systematic exercises on decoding is a necessary condition to progress in learning to read. However, it would be useful to envision a method/methodology that allowed for more flexibility in the progression of activities. Depending on the moment, these activities could focus alternatively on fostering phonological awareness (various tasks to work on sounds, along with tracking sounds, including from images, to detect the presence or absence of the studied sound and its position in the word), syllabic blending activities, visual recognition activities or orthographic memorization activities.

4. There is a strong demand from teachers to have access to media other than the textbooks; their requests concern images and additional texts in particular. Access to books should not be reserved to students who already master the code. It would also be worthwhile to propose and distribute simple texts with a view to teaching comprehension from Grade 1. This implies using teacher read-alouds as a source of motivation for the students. Similar suggestions have already been made during more intermittent projects linked to text pedagogy.

5. Adding consolidation activities may slow down the pace of lessons. With this in mind, units could be grouped (the vowel e for instance, without insisting on exercises on é, è, or ê at the start of Grade 1) or some units of linked sounds could even be omitted, in particular in Grade 2, knowing that these units can be more easily addressed in an approach that is embedded in the text. In this case the units of the code that have been covered should be memorized.

6. The purpose of reading is to make it possible for students to read independently.

CHAPTER **9**

ANALYSIS OF READING INSTRUCTION CONTENT IN NIGER

Table 1 lists information about the schools selected for the study, the areas in which they are located, the languages spoken by students and teachers, the class types (traditional, bilingual or Franco-Arabic), the grades in which the reading lessons were observed, the number of students in the class and the school, and the number of classes in the school. The data collected concerning these different points provides a concise overview of the schools and classes.

Region/Name of school	Area/ Languages spoken	Type of class	Grade observed/ Group size	Student Numbers	Number of classes
M1	Urban / Hausa- Fulfulde	Bilingual NECS	Grade 1/55	443 (209 girls - 234 boys)	9
M2	Rural / Hausa	Bilingual ELAN	Grade 1/25	179 (83 girls - 96 boys)	6
M3	Rural / Hausa - Zarma - Fulfulde	Bilingual traditional	Grade 1/31		
D1	Rural / Zarma	French traditional	Grade 3/29	367 (172 girls - 195 boys)	11
D2	Rural / Hausa	Bilingual NECS	Grade 1 /40	392 (179 girls - 213 boys)	10
D3	Urban / Zarma - Hausa	Bilingual traditional	Grade 2/26	153 (69 girls - 84 boys)	6
N1	Urban	French traditional	Grade 1/43	503 (253 girls - 250 girls)	12
N2	Urban	Bilingual traditional	Grade 2/51		
N3	Urban / Hausa	Bilingual ELAN	Grade 1/42	691 (353 girls - 338 boys)	13
N4	Urban	French traditional	Grade 3/54		

Table 9.1 Data on schools and classrooms where reading lessons were observed

As can be seen from Table 9.1, the data in this analysis is drawn from a wide and diverse range of schools and classes, providing a qualitative picture of reading instruction practices in Niger in the first three years of compulsory education. It may be noted that Hausa appears to be the most spoken language in the three regions of the study. It should also be pointed out that in seven out of the ten classes, reading instruction is conducted in the students' mother tongue, however variations exist with regard to the use of national languages in instruction. Thus, a distinction can be made between schools that contain traditional bilingual classes, bilingual classes that operate according to the approach proposed by ELAN and new bilingual schools of the NECS type.

Region	Grade	Training	Years of experience
M1	Grade 1	CAP	11-20 years
M2	Grade 1	CAP	11-20 years
M3	Grade 1	CFCA	21-30 years
D1	Grade 3	CFEEN	11-20 years
D2	Grade 1	CAP	0-5 years
D3	Grade 2		21-30 years
N1	Grade 1	BEPC + 4 years' work experience + 2 years ENI	0-5 years
N2	Grade 3	BEPC + 2 years ENI	6-10 years
N3	Grade 1/ELAN	CFEEN	6-10 years
N4	Grade 3	Primary school teacher	0-5 years

Table 9.2: Information on grades and teachers

Overall Table 9.2 shows that the teachers in the sample have received training capped by a teaching qualification. The majority has built up solid experience (6 years) in teaching.

1. ANALYSIS OF THE TEACHING BY GRADE

The study presents a very uneven distribution of classes by grade, with six Grade 1 classes, two Grade 2 classes and two Grade 3 classes.

TEACHING CONTENT IN GRADE 1

The Grade 1 classes are located in three different areas (Maradi, Dosso and Niamey). Each class contains between 25 and 55 students, corresponding to an average of 40 students per class. Two of the classes use French as the language of instruction; one of them adopts a traditional bilingual approach, two of them follow a NECS approach[79] and two of them an ELAN approach. Is this heterogeneity reflected in classroom practices?

It is apparent from the interviews that the instruction focuses strongly on the code. The descriptions of the lesson reveal that, in most cases, lesson content and progression are determined by letter-based exercises. Teachers insist on the importance of syllabification, which is often considered as a cue in early reading and is used to introduce students to reading.

Writing activities are barely mentioned by the teachers. Sometimes, students go up to the blackboard to write a word, or copy words onto their slates and copybooks.

79- It should be noted that for one of the two NECS classes no transcription or translation was provided.

However, it is worth mentioning that many teachers refer to activities that go beyond the framework of the reading lesson as a deciphering exercise: work on themes proposed by students; storytelling; the construction of small texts with sentences provided by students; reading excerpts of novels in Hausa; or supplementing what is proposed in the textbooks with short texts from the library. Knowing that this variety of activities exists, certainly puts the comments given below into perspective.

The question of the relationship between the national language and the official language (French) arises several times. If the language instruction is in Hausa, it is easier for students to make progress in reading. This progression is noticeable. However, dialects and variations in pronunciation also stand out. While standard Hausa is used in the classroom, there are significant dialectical differences in the languages spoken by the children. The teachers emphasize the importance of using the national language, even in classrooms where the language of instruction is French. In one interview, a teacher commented: 'Students don't have a good level of French and this is why Hausa is widely spoken by students while they are at school'.

According to another teacher, French is taught as a second language mainly through words encountered in class. A third teacher mentions a language session in which students perform short plays. These little scenes are prepared in advance by a group of volunteer students who stay back 5 to 10 minutes after lessons or during break. The teacher has students devise short sentences, based on pictures, creating a short scene to be performed in front of the class.

Writings and texts to teach reading

The first step in the analysis of the writings and texts used in the lessons was to look at the material that serves as a basis for the teaching. In particular, wanted to see if and how social texts or writings, drawn from the real world, outside the school, are used in class. It appears that the texts of this kind were not used as the starting point or reference for the reading work in any of the Grade 1 lessons observed, if text is taken to mean a linguistic unit with a communicative function.

The types of written text used to help teach reading are as follows:

- Two speech bubbles, on the next page, depict a conversation between two people. The sentences are written in both cursive and print (lesson taught in French) (see Figure 9.1).
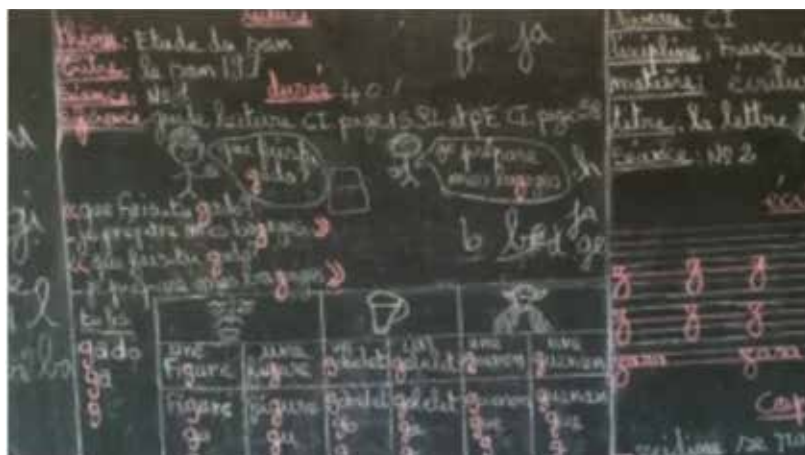
*Figure 9.1: Speech bubbles, with one character who says 'what are you doing gado?'
and another who replies 'I'm packing my bags'; sentences written in both cursive and print*

- A sentence taken from a reading book and written on the blackboard.
- A sentence produced by students from a discussion on hygiene.
- A paragraph from a text written on the blackboard (four sentences about diseases).
- A word: *lalle* - henna; or *adda* - hatchet.

In one of the classes (i.e. the ELAN class), the teacher does 'guided reading' on the topic of flies. The book is shown image by image and page by page, so that the text is unveiled part by part. This way, the students say what they see. (see Figure 9.2).

Figure 9.2: Teacher showing an image from a story in the textbook hiding what is to come next so as to unveil the text part by part.

The observations show that, in the first lessons in Grade 1, no reference is made to social texts or to the communicative purpose of writing. Furthermore, no link is made to the communicative function of the texts or the more general purpose of reading.

Of course, these remarks may have been prompted by the artefact of the observation situation. The teachers concentrated on showing what they viewed as the essential aspects of reading instruction in Grade 1, namely the work on the code. Through the interviews it became apparent that other types of texts were used in the classrooms to, for instance, tell stories. Nonetheless, it is evident that the lessons do not link work on the code to the activity of 'reading', which would give it an entirely different meaning. In other words, decoding would be understood as a tool that serves the higher linguistic activity of 'reading', which includes the essential dimension of comprehension – that of a text or, on a more limited scale, of a sentence. What then is the place of comprehension in the teaching?

The comprehension of writings and texts

The fact that social texts or writings feature very rarely in the lessons suggests that work on comprehension is not the main priority. Indeed, working extensively on comprehension presupposes the use of texts in which meaning is constructed from multiple language elements, in particular the relationship between statements. That said, one can also work on comprehension at the level of the sentence, even if this is much simpler and limited, requiring students to make fewer connections and, most importantly, no inferences. For example, sentences suggested by the students themselves, referring to their daily lives (e.g. 'Mari played with dolls', 'Naridine wrote on the board' or 'Raabi is giving seeds/millet to the hens') require no inference or interpretation. They simply represent snapshots of the students' reality.

Reading comprehension of the book, on the dangerous nature of flies, is taught in the order presented by the teacher: this 'guided reading' is followed by a summary of what the students saw in the pictures (see above). Following this, a broader, more general discussion ensues on what attracts flies and especially what happens if someone eats food on which there were flies. In other words, the text merely serves as a way of introducing a hygiene lesson. The lesson does not go back to the text in the book.

More elementary work on comprehension can be observed in a number of situations. One of these situations is the following: based on the sentences written on the blackboard, the teacher constructs new sentences, pointing to the words one after the other. This sometimes results in sentences that have a meaning and, some that don't, for example 'writing is Nuridine'. This is an example of a metalinguistic exercise: the student must understand whether the sentence is meaningful or not, and then make a judgment of the sentence based on this understanding (or impossibility to understand).

It can be concluded that comprehension is not a central concern. The lessons concentrate on teaching the code, even though there are moments when students work on texts, as described above.

Mastering the code

As mentioned previously, the work in the classroom focuses predominantly on mastering the code. A wide range of approaches exist, among which a few general trends can be singled out.

First, there is the traditional technique of learning the alphabet by heart and reciting it regularly. Through continuous repetition students become familiar with the letters in the alphabet. This knowledge is fundamental to learning how to read, but insufficient on its own, as all teachers in the sample are aware.

Figure 9.3: A student points to letters that have been learned.
The alphabet in both upper and low case letters is present in every class.

Beyond this general observation about the importance of the alphabet, an initial and more precise remark can be made: while in a number of cases the starting point may be a sentence, in almost all cases the students' attention is directed to a word or specific words. In fact, two techniques are used:

- Focusing on a word and segmenting it (word – syllable – sound) (top-down process).
- Listing out a series of words and have students identify 'the sounds they hear the most', such as the sound 'repeated in *koko, haki, baki, kaifi, laka, keke*' (bottom-up process).

The two methods are not mutually exclusive and are often combined: students identify /r/ as the sound that is repeated in a series of words, then they focus on one word, e.g. 'raabi'.

The 'sound' is usually isolated using the same technique. For example: the teacher asks what letter the word 'kulu' (bean) begins with. The students then segment the word into syllables after which the teacher asks them to isolate /k/.

In another case, the teacher asks the students how to segment the expression 'une figure' (a face). Students are hesitant to given an answer but after the teacher hides the word 'une', they are able to say 'une'. Next, they segment the word 'figure' into two syllables and finally they isolate the phoneme /g/. However, it should be noted that when formally pointing out the sound /g/ to students, the teacher refers to it as the *letter* g and no longer uses the term *sound*. This kind of shift in terminology is not uncommon in the lessons.

Yet another way of working on the relationship between sounds and letters is to play a game, with letters, written on the board. Groups of five to six students are formed and asked to stand in two lines in front of the board, in single file. The two students at the top of the line are given a stick. Some letters are written on the board, for example m, l and a. The teacher pronounces the word 'Ali'; the first letter is a. The first student has to touch the letter 'a' with the stick and earns a point for his/her group, and so on (see Figure 9.4).

Figure 9.4: Students playing a letter game on the blackboard

These activities can pose some difficulty when conducted in French, which is not fully mastered by the teachers. For example, when segmenting the word 'guenon' (monkey), a teacher draws the students' attention to 'gue', stressing /g-U-e/ as if it were three sounds, and then returns to the sound /g/. No comments are made on the relationship between the grapheme and the phoneme, and the fact that this is one of several ways of writing the sound /g/. This is by no means intended as a criticism of the teacher's approach. Indeed, it is possible that students learn the distinction between different types of sounds, implicitly. However, this example does highlight the difficult situation in which students are placed: they are taught how to represent sounds through the French system at the same time as they are learning the French language. The non-transparency of the French system, in which 36 phonemes are transcribed by over 130 graphemes, further complicates the process for them.

Another technique to teach students the code, is to have them find sounds in words (or to find letters in words, the difference not always being clear between the two entities in the lessons, although this is less problematic in national languages than in French). In several sequences the teacher asks students to produce words that contain a given sound, 'word hunting', as one teacher calls it. Students then suggest words, which are then written on the blackboard and read aloud.

Some exercises start from the written form. In one exercise, the students are asked to find and highlight graphemes representing a sound in different words or sentences, written on the blackboard. Then, they write out all the graphemes that match the sound at the top of the blackboard (see Figure 9.5).
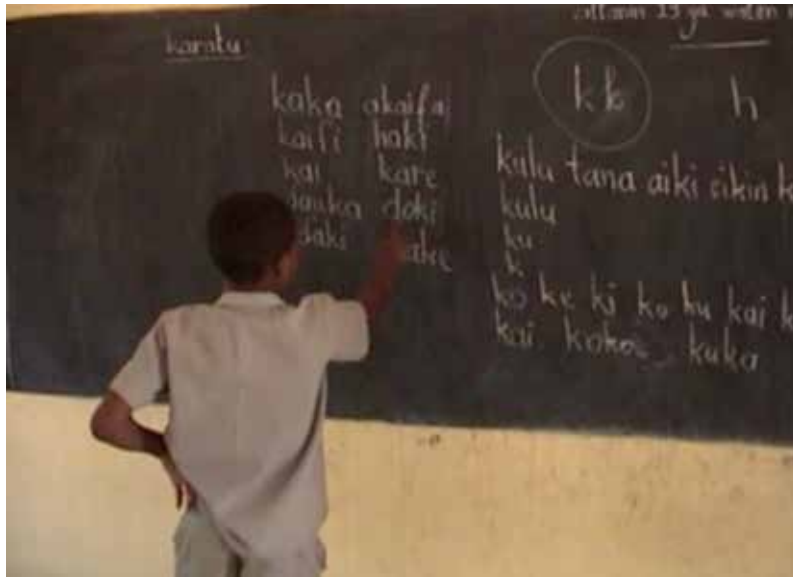
Figure 9.5: A student points out 'k' in words that were suggested by the class and written up on the blackboard

The activity of systematically forming syllables is also practised: by starting from a consonant and combining it with a vowel, various syllables are created. For example, the teacher asks: 'what does /l/ and /u/ make?'. The students respond and, sometimes, the syllable is written on the board.

Figure 9.6: The teacher systematically points out the vowel and asks what syllable is created

Moving to a slightly bigger scale than the letter, students are asked to point out a particular word in a sentence from the book, for example 'koko' and 'kuku'.

In several classes, systematic techniques are used to distinguish between letters and sounds. For instance, in the techniques used in a NECS class, (similar to the ones used in the ELAN classes), there is a ritual whereby the students recite (or read from posters): 'This is X, its name is X and it makes the sound X'. Or, in the ELAN approach, students are supposed to 'sing' (sound out) the letter repeatedly, for example the sound 'g': ggg. Yet another technique, also used in the ELAN classes, is to emphasize the fact that 'w' is always pronounced as 'wawwawwaw'.

In several sequences, particular attention is paid to another characteristic of graphemes that adds complexity to the learning process, namely the fact that they can be written in both cursive and print (both forms may be used side by side, see Figure 9.6). Sometimes, the teacher explains that the two forms are identical or similar, without overly stressing the point. When the teacher is working on cursive and print forms, as well as on upper and lower case letters, it can be problematic to do exercises based on isolating sounds. Students may mix up the letters or think that they are different while they are not (see Figure 9.7).

Figure 9.7: Student writing a capital E

Although, the NECS classes do not seem to differ significantly from the traditional classes, the ELAN classes do include methods that are not found elsewhere. The most significant of these, in line with the goal of generating metalinguistic reflection, is based on changing the position of language units in order to observe the effects it has on meaning. Two exercises of this kind were observed:

- After writing 'gadalaɓo', the teacher moves around the four syllables to create 'dala oga'. The teacher then asks the students if this word means something. The students answer no, whereupon the teacher points out: 'yet we can read it' (see Figure 9.8).

Figure 9.8: 'Gadala o' becomes 'dala oga': "does this word mean something?"

- In the above mentioned exercise, the student makes sentences out of words pointed to on a blackboard, by the teacher (see section on comprehension, above).

A technique that is frequently used, is the repetition of sentences. For example, this technique is applied when using two speech bubbles (see Figure 9.1) or with sentences suggested by the students (see Figure 9.5). It is not clear if this is to facilitate comprehension, or rather to automate reading, with a view to mastering the code. The hypothesis underlying repetition is that it allows all students a chance to practise their reading skills. However, it is likely that, instead of reading the sentence, they repeat what is said aloud. Therefore, if there is no variation in what is read aloud, this is not an efficient technique for learning to read.

Writing features very rarely in the observed lessons[80] and when it does, it is primarily in the form of copying exercises on words, syllables and letters. Two sample activities are: having students go up to the blackboard individually to write a letter, syllable or word; or having all the students write a letter on their slates or copy a word or sentence from the blackboard.

Figure 9.9:
The teacher distributes pencils to copy words
from the blackboard

A student writes words from the blackboard

80- This may be due to a bias of the observation conditions: the request was to observe reading lessons.

Synthesis

Overall, a great deal of effort goes into making students proficient in the code. A number of different techniques are used to ensure students acquire the necessary knowledge to: (1) segment words into syllables and sounds; (2) find specific sounds in words; (3) form syllables; and (4) learn letters and their corresponding sounds so that they can recognize these letters in their different forms (upper case and lower case, cursive and print). Sometimes, students are asked to recognize words in a text, or to observe how the displacement of a syllable within the word can impact its meaning. Students rarely do any writing activities, it is limited to writing letters on the blackboard, or copying letters, words or sentences from the blackboard onto slates or copybooks. As a result, writing is mostly focused on syllables rather than entire text or words. Students never spontaneously produce writing themselves, not even in the form of a dictation to the teacher.

The transparent nature of the code, in national languages, makes it easier for teachers to use decoding activities. For example, in situations where, students always pronounce the letter 'g' as 'ggg'. However, this is not true in French as the letter 'g' corresponds to several sounds".

In the classroom, the teachers therefore strongly focus on decoding rather than on comprehension. With few exceptions, reading is limited to decoding, matching sounds and letters, and recognizing syllables or sometimes words. Students work on the text by repeatedly reading sentences, a task that presumably also involves comprehension. However, they are rarely asked to independently discover the meaning of a sentence or the text.

Written culture is limited to knowledge of the code. The students pay little attention to the meaning of the written text, except in some classes (i.e. one of the ELAN classes). Instead, they focus on the correspondence between letters and sounds, syllables and words.

As mentioned above, it may be that in the filmed lessons, the teachers only showed what they considered to be essential in Grade 1, even though other activities exist. One must therefore be very careful when interpreting data from the six classes, especially as the interviews revealed that other reading-related exercises are used in the classroom. It is striking, however, that code-based activities are not integrated into situations that give meaning to the work, or only exceptionally so.

TEACHING CONTENT IN GRADE 2

Only two Grade 2 classes are observed and so it is difficult to make any generalizations. Furthermore, the two observed teaching sequences are very different. Comparing them highlights the transition that takes place between Grade 1 and Grade 3, with one sequence more strongly grounded in Grade 1 and the other already preparing transition to the next stage.

This difference is also evident in the interviews. For one of the teachers, it is important that the reading instruction concentrates on 'syllabification', particularly for the weaker students. His goal, is to have all Grade 2 students read words with three or even four syllables, by the end of the year.

Another teacher remarks on the limited number of textbooks available, in French and Hausa, making it difficult for students to do independent reading.

This teacher always starts the lesson with silent reading. Afterwards, a series of oral comprehension questions are asked, to see if the students had understood the text. They then read the text aloud to work on reading comprehension together with the teacher. In a later lesson, the students write out words they find in the text and work on answering comprehension questions.

This teacher also distributed the brochure *Gemina et Jamirou* to the students.

The two teachers report that students make more progress in Hausa than in French. This is because few students have difficulty in reading the national language and thus find it easier to participate more frequently in class activities. The main problem is that the students read French the same way they read Hausa. For example, AU is pronounced AOU in Hausa, and therefore they also read it as AOU in French. Students in bilingual schools learn to read more quickly in a national language but remain handicapped in French when making the transition to secondary school, where assessment focuses on French alone.

The filmed lessons show that the teachers implement the lesson plans as described in their interviews.

Writings and texts to teach reading

There is very little evidence of texts being used in the two observed teaching sessions. Writing is present only in the form of sentences on the blackboard. This may be due to the lack of resources. For example, in one of the classes, the teacher has to write out the excerpt of the texts, from the reading book, onto the blackboard as there is only one textbook for every four students.

In one of the two classes, the teaching sequence begins with a talk on the theme of hygiene. It is possible that this talk is based on a text, although no explicit reference is made to any specific text.

Overall, it can be concluded that writings and texts appear very little in the classroom context.

Written and textual comprehension

In one class, an excerpt from a text (one paragraph) is used to conduct a comprehension exercise, on the blackboard. Students are asked to 'read the text with their eyes' after which the teacher asks 'what is the text about?'. A brief discussion ensues concerning the content of the text (illness and health), but at no point does the teacher refer back to the text during this phase of the exercise. The text is then read aloud several times by the students, pointing to each word, with a ruler, as they read (see Figure 9.10).
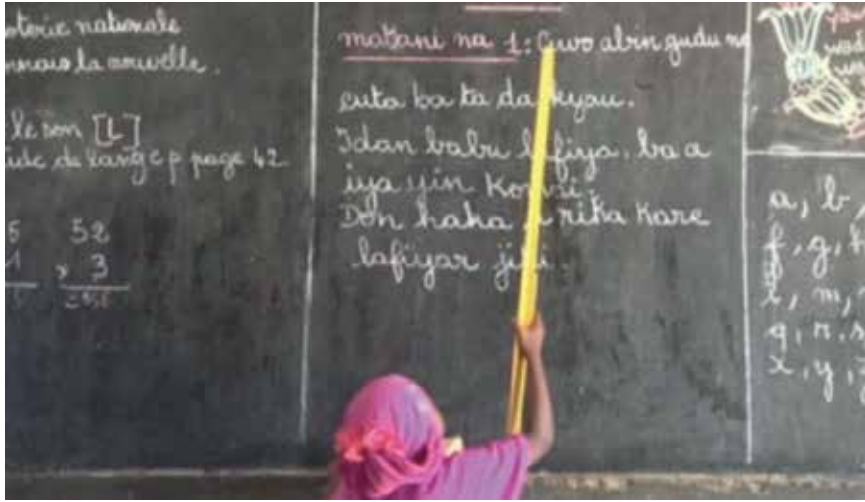
Figure 9.10: Students read while pointing to the words with a large ruler

In the following step, the teacher reads the same text aloud so as to provide a model to follow, and then it is read again by the students. This is an expressive reading technique. The teacher assesses the students' comprehension based on their ability to read the text with the right 'expression'. However, this exercise can also work the other way around. Through repeated reading, the students become progressively fluent and master comprehension of the text. It should be noted that this repeated reading is not accompanied by any commentary by the teacher. Repetition is considered as a means to improve reading and enable comprehension of the text.

In the other class, a very limited comprehension exercise takes place, focusing on a single sentence ('Raabi go ga hayni say gor ey se' [Raabi is giving seeds to the hens]). First, the teacher asks a number of comprehension questions after reading the sentence. Then, students collectively give an answer, one after the other, always pointing to the words they are reading with a ruler. These repetition exercises are a way to have a large number of students participate in the activity (see Figure 9.11).

Figure 9.11: A student reads a sentence on the blackboard while pointing to the words

Mastering the code

In one of the two sequences, the work on the code is limited to recognizing words in the text on the blackboard: the teacher says a word and a student goes to the blackboard to show where this word is found. This exercise on whole-word recognition, marks a shift from the focus on letters and sounds in the work on the code.
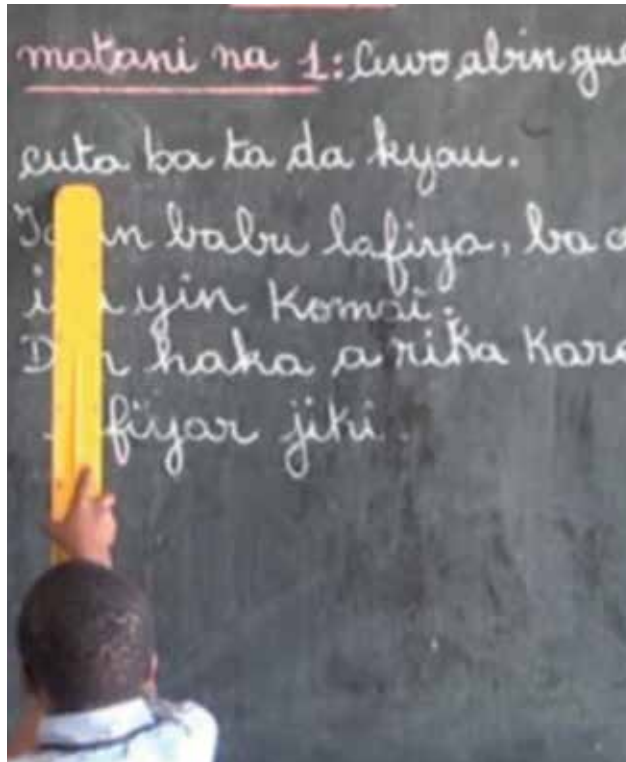
Figure 9.12.: A student points to the word 'cuta'

This contrasts with the (top-down) approach in the other sequence, which starts from a sentence proposed by the students. This sentence contains words with 'r', for instance the name 'Raabi'. In order to help students, distinguish the /r/ sound, the teacher gives examples of several words beginning with 'r'. First the syllable is isolated and then the 'r': the teacher repeats 'Raabi go ga hayni say gor ey se. Raabi! ra! r!' several times while pointing out the progression from sentence to word, to syllable, and then to letter/sound on the blackboard. Students go up to the blackboard to repeat the exercise, always using the ruler to point to what they are reading.

Figure 9.13: The teacher points to the sentence, the word ('rabbi'), the syllable ('ra') and the letter ('r' representing the sound /r/); both the cursive and print forms of 'r' are being studied in the lesson

Further exercises on the code follow: finding other words with 'r' (students also suggest French words such as 'propreté' (cleanliness) and 'morale' (moral) – see picture); pointing out words in sentences on the blackboard; and marking r in red in the sentences on the blackboard.
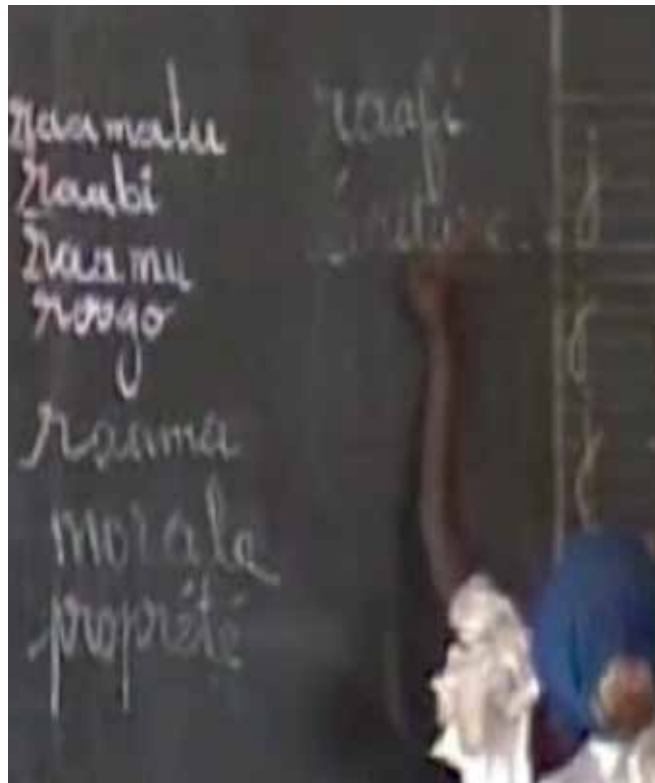
Figure 9.14: A student uses red chalk to highlight the 'r' in the word 'écriture' (writing)

Synthesis

The two teaching sequences highlight the transition that takes places between Grade 1 and Grade 3. In one of the classes, the teacher is still working on recognizing letters and isolating sounds. Unlike in Grade 1, it is assumed that students understand the principle of correspondence so this is considered as a revision exercise, with a particular focus on the two types of writing: print and cursive The only writing that appears in the lesson is the sentence that the students dictated themselves, based on the previous day's lesson. There was therefore no comprehension difficulty regarding the content. Doing multiple re-readings of the same sentence while pointing to the words, turn the reading lesson into a ritual that ultimately focuses on the code, as is shown by the title displayed on the blackboard.

It is important to note the presence of French on the blackboard. Furthermore, words that comprise the same phoneme /r/ and its grapheme representation 'r' (in both Hausa and French) are also present. This example of the same graphophonemic correspondence, existing in the two languages, is not discussed further. The two languages are presented as if they were written using the same transparent system of spelling, which is not the case (although in this particular instance it does not pose a problem).

In another class, the teacher starts by having the students read silently. The students must try to understand the text, as the teacher subsequently asks them what the text is about. However, the teacher does not go back to the text to check the students' answers statements. The next phase consists of 'expressive' reading, including a reading model, provided by the teacher. In addition to work on the content of the text, the teacher also works on the code by having students recognize words in the text, independent from its meaning.

One therefore observes a transition from Grade 1 to Grade 3. While one teacher still works on the code in terms of the correspondence between sounds and letters using the well-known sentence-syllable-word-letter segmentation technique, the other asks students to read silently 'with their eyes', assuming they can decipher proficiently, thereby shifting the focus of the lesson to the content of a paragraph. However, the content of the text is not the focus of the following lesson, which instead concentrates on sounding out the text (read by many students) and word recognition.

TEACHING CONTENT IN GRADE 3

The two Grade 3 lessons observed are in French.

From one of the interviews, it was apparent that comprehension of the text was not the main objective of the lesson on reading instruction. Furthermore, although the lesson has a specific focus and a theme (e.g. telling the time), it is not essential to it. Instead, the objective is for the learners to be able to understand and properly decipher the *words*. For the teacher, deciphering means reading while pointing out the words syllable by syllable. The teacher says that the focus is on deciphering syllables, even though the students are no longer supposed to be working on sounds in Grade 3. Syllabification is also an assessment criterion. However, according to the teacher, some students have persistent reading difficulties, namely forming words from syllables. To overcome these difficulties, a syllable correspondence table is presented on the blackboard and word dictation exercises are used.

The teaching unit is focused on a theme, divided into 30-minute lessons (except for one day during the week when two reading sessions are done to complete the 6 sessions of a unit).

The following teaching methods are used:

- Quick reading using the Martinière method (around five minutes).
- Tracking exercises based on speech bubbles and text (around ten minutes).
- Reading aloud speech bubbles and texts (around 15 minutes).

In the different activities carried out in class, students are asked to indicate the number of words present, identify punctuation marks, or point out conjugated verbs and double letters, etc.

The teacher uses a national language (Zarma or Hausa) instead of French, to explain complicated words when the students have difficulty understanding. Sometimes the teacher also questions the students, or asks them to give explanations in a national language to ensure that students have understood.

The filmed lessons more concretely illustrate the methods explained in the interviews. They also correspond to the lesson plan in the textbook and the blackboard.
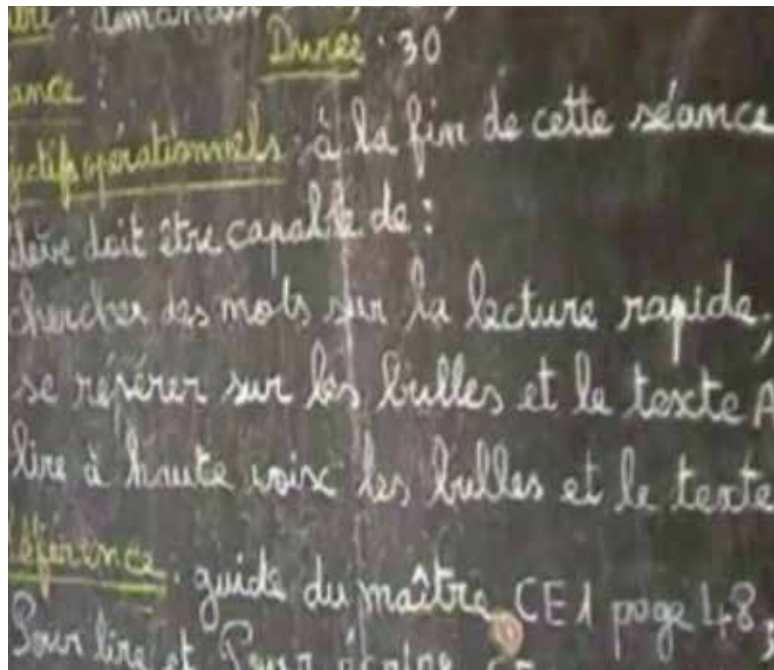
Figure 9.15: Theme, objectives and progress of the lesson explained on the blackboard

Writings and texts to teach reading

Writing is present in the classes in the form of small posters but they are more present in some classrooms than in others. Written culture is therefore present in classrooms, but no reference is made to these writings. In the filmed lessons, the students only encounter texts in the textbook. However, this observation should be treated with caution, since the research agreement stipulated that teachers should conduct their usual reading lesson.

The comprehension of writings and texts

In both lesson sequences, the students read speech bubbles and a short text. One gets the impression, that a greater emphasis is placed on students' ability to *sound out* the texts than, on the comprehension of the text. Perhaps the fact the texts are in French, a language students are not yet proficient in, hinders their comprehension and steers their work towards the formal characteristics of language. Several factors reinforce this impression, especially the lack of questions asked by teachers about the content of what has been read. What seems to matter is the students' ability to 'say what is written', and to 'transcode'. It is possible for students to complete the tasks they are asked to perform without understanding what they are reading.

Mastering the code

Mastering the code remains the central focus of the lessons, even in Grade 3. In both sequences, students work on different parts of the textbook, in a given order.

First they track words in a double-entry table entitled 'fast reading', noting on their slates what line and column the words are located in and then holding up the slates to show them to the teacher (Martinière method).

Figure 9.16: Tracking a word in a double-entry table, noting it down on the slate and displaying it (Martinière method)

Other exercises, focusing on the text are also carried out: identifying the longest sentence in the text; counting the number of sentences without a verb; counting how many times a word appears in the text; tracking how many times a sound or letter appears in the text.

This work on the code is followed by a read-aloud. In the two sequences, the teacher serves as a model; as she reads, she demonstrates the various intonations and liaisons in the text. The students then read the text aloud, one at the time, making sure to follow the text with their fingers. Their pronunciation is regularly corrected by the teacher as they read. The type of error that is most commonly corrected suggests that the students do not understand what they are reading: they use words that don't make sense in context of the sentence or invent new words entirely. Students tend to read in a monotone, at this age. This can make it hard to tell if students actually understand what they are reading or if they are simply trying to transcode and sound out the text. Furthermore, the successive repetitions of the text, aloud, can result in it being memorized.[81]

Figure 9.17: Student following the text with her finger while the teacher reads

81- This practice of repetitive reading in a foreign language, in this case French, recalls the way Latin was taught in Europe up to the 19th century (see Chartier and Rockwell, 2014).

Synthesis

These reading lessons, which are exclusively in French (therefore in a foreign language), still focus strongly on the code, even though the teacher spends less time on sounds and letters. A lot of the work carried out, in class, focuses on analysing superficial features of the text (i.e. counting words, word recognition etc.). This is completely independent from comprehension of the text. However, students are not given any confirmation on whether their interpretation of the exercises (on speech bubbles, texts and the discussion) is correct. The purpose of this lesson is to enable students to transform written text into words, to be able to read aloud. No exercise explicitly addresses the comprehension of the text, even though the final goal of the reading lessons is to read texts in a book. The lesson appears to be organized in such a way that students do not have to demonstrate that they have understood what they have read. The fact that the exercises predominantly focus on formal aspects of the text (i.e. focusing on spelling, punctuation, letter sounds), seems to confirm this impression.

2. ANALYSIS OF THE PROGRESSION

It is very difficult to understand the students' progression from the observed, sample lessons. The number of classes is very small and there is an uneven distribution of students across grades. Furthermore, in the Grade 3 classes that were studied, the language of instruction is in French, which is not the case for most of the classes. If one adds up the observations made across the three grades, one can nevertheless outline a progression implemented by the teachers in their classroom practices.

In Grade 1, the lessons almost exclusively focus on mastering the code, through exercises based on isolating sounds, recognizing letters and matching sounds and letters. This work regularly includes the recognition and formation of syllables, through various exercises. It is usually conducted on the basis of segmenting and sometimes blending words. While these words may occur in sentences (but never in texts), these sentences merely serve as pretexts for teaching the code. At no time, except in one sequence, do students work on a text and its comprehension.

Grade 2 is the phase of transition but there is still a strong emphasis on mastering the code through word recognition and sound-letter matching exercises. However, the work increasingly shifts towards reading aloud or having students read silently. This type of reading involves work on comprehension. However, the use of texts in lesson units is limited and the comprehension work is not very developed. Students reconstruct what the text says but do not go back to the text to verify this reconstruction, and there is no correspondence established between what they have understood and the form of the text. The lesson is conducted as if comprehension occurs instantaneously, simply by reading the text.

In Grade 3, the texts in the reading books and the speech bubbles in the small scenes, drawn on the board, constitute the lesson unit. However, these texts are not the focus of any comprehension work. They serve as pretexts for a variety of activities: recognizing words, sounds and letters, or tracking sentences. Reading aloud is a key exercise, first done by the teacher and then by several students in succession. The main aim appears

to be 'deciphering', as stated by one of the teachers, with the syllable acting as the unit used to decipher. The text is not considered as a meaningful unit and even less so a unit of communication.

To a certain extent, one can speak of a progression. Yet, comprehension of the text is still not a central concern in Grade 3. It is true, however, that there is a gradual shift in the approach to teaching the code: the initial focus on small isolated units (sounds and letters) progressively develops into exercises on recognizing and tracking (quickly if possible) words in sentences and texts.w

3. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Some of the conclusions regarding the classroom observations are listed below.

1- The teachers are all experienced and competent in managing their classes. They make an essential contribution to reading instruction.

2- Texts feature very rarely in the lessons (and even less in the everyday environment). They essentially appear in Grade 3 alone, in the reading book. The main lesson unit is the sentence or the word.

3- There are signs of progression in terms of the lesson units, texts being the exclusive reference from Grade 3. However, comprehension is not central to the work on the texts.

4- In Grade 1 and partially in Grade 2, the work on sentences focuses on tracking sounds and letters in words. The students do not work on the sentence unit to grasp its communicative value or to discuss what it means. Instead, it is assumed that they immediately understand its meaning.

5- Generally speaking, the comprehension of the texts used in class is not the central focus of the lesson. There is no collective construction of written comprehension.

6- Reading aloud is a key component of teaching. Generally, the same sentence or excerpt is read several times, first by the teacher and then by the students. This reading does not involve work on comprehension of what is read: the exercises are designed so that the students can read – that is to say decipher – without having to understand the text.

7- In Grade 1, there is a strong emphasis on the distinction between the letter and its 'name', and between the letter and its sound it 'always' represents. Specific, ritualized forms (singing, stressed pronunciation) are used to practice the sound.

8- There do not appear to be significant differences between classes conducted in French and classes in national languages. However, it does seem that the ELAN classes draw on a wider range of activities. These are also the only classes that work on the text and its comprehension, especially through guided reading.

9- The lessons are centered on the blackboard. Slates are used at given moments. Once or twice the use of copybooks is observed. This limited range of classroom materials limits options and induces a collective approach, focused on the teacher.

10- Students sometimes do not have their own textbooks, which further increases the need to use the blackboard and most importantly prevents students from building an individual relationship with writing such as is materialized in the book or textbook.

11- In some classes, especially the NECS classes, there are posters that represent writing and some of its components (letters and their sounds). In general, however, writing has very little presence in the classes and few texts enter the classrooms from outside, nor is written culture present through the books available in class or in libraries

KEY POINTS

1- Different types of exercises on texts could be introduced, to reduce the excessive focus on mastering the code and more clearly demonstrate that the purpose of reading is not deciphering. It would be beneficial to reinforce the presence of written culture through posters, books and other texts.

2- It seems essential to devote more time to writing in different forms: copying, making up short sentences, the exchange of words between students, etc. This would help students to acquire the alphabetic principle.

3- Writing can also be practised in the form of student-to-adult dictations.

4- A more flexible and more varied approach could be taken to working on phonological awareness systematically, through various techniques that go beyond the practice of isolating a sound in a word.

5- The exercise of reading aloud is an interesting way of initiating students into writing. However, a broader variety of exercises could be used: presenting texts to others and reading in groups.

6- The progression from Grade 1 to Grade 3 could be more continuous: the practice of reading texts should be included from the beginning and work on the code could be extended further, as far as Grade 3.

7- Systematic exercises on reading comprehension in class could be added, based on the texts read in class.
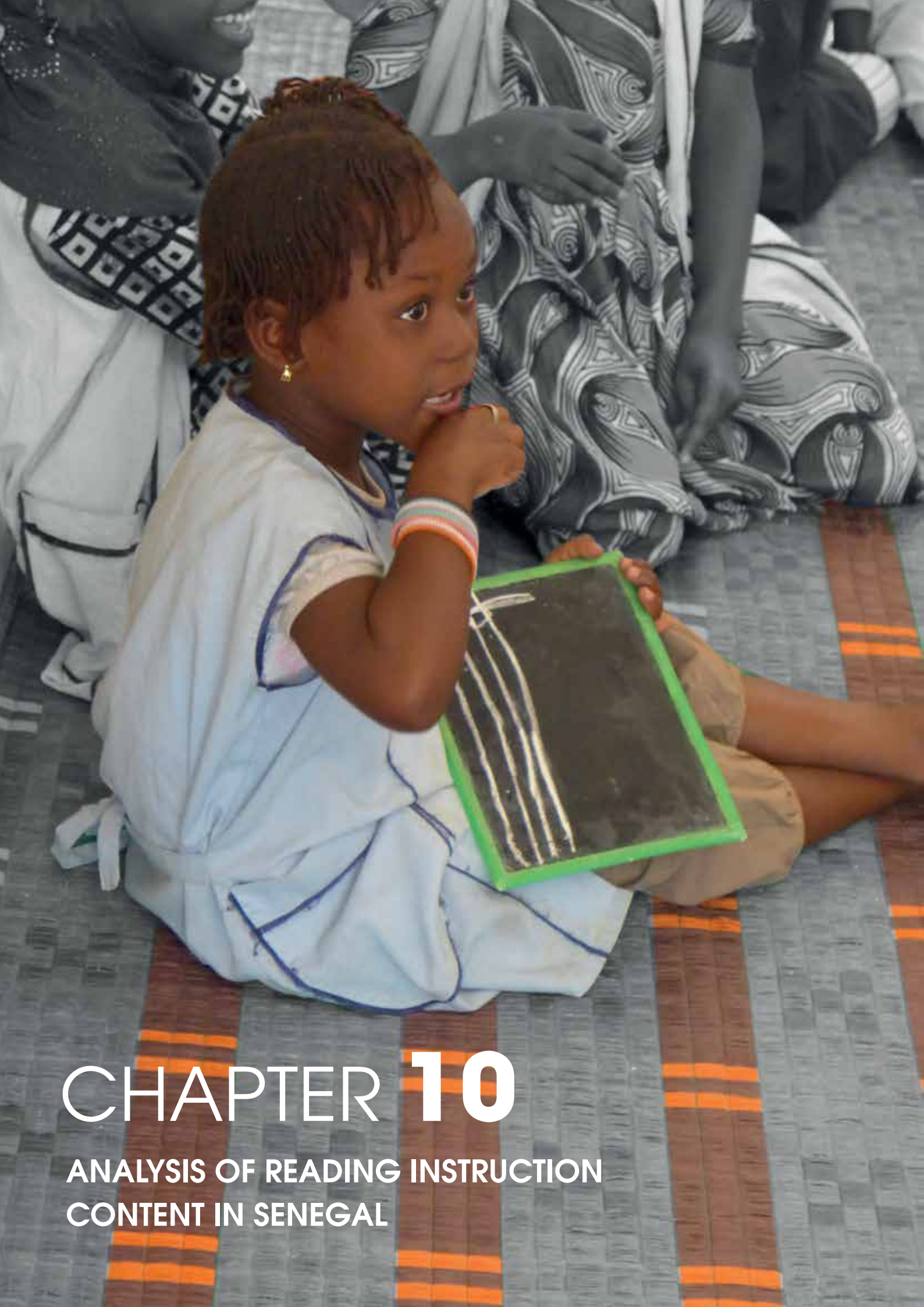
CHAPTER **10**

ANALYSIS OF READING INSTRUCTION
CONTENT IN SENEGAL

In Senegal, reading lessons were filmed in 18 schools. In each school, the lesson took place in either Grade 1, Grade 2 or Grade 3. As originally planned, interviews with teachers focusing on reading instruction were systematically conducted before and after each lesson was filmed.

Table 10.1 presents data relating to the schools and classes included in the study. The table indicates the region, the type of area, the main languages spoken, the class types, grade, the number of students in the class and the school, and the number of classes in each school.

Region/ Name of school	Area/ Languages spoken	Type of class	Grade observed/ Group size	Student numbers	Number of classes
K.1	Urban/ Wolof	Trad.	Grade 1/26	368 (199 girls - 169 boys)	12
K.2	Rural/ Wolof - Bambara	Trad.	Grade 1/36	181	6
K.3	Rural/ Wolof - Pulaar	Multi-grade	Grade 1/ Grade 2/42 in total	125 (67 girls - 8 boys)	6
K.4	Urban/ Wolof	Franco-Arabic	Grade 2/42	395 (201 girls - 194 boys)	11
K.5	Urban/ Wolof	Trad.	Grade 3/41	499	12
K.6	Urban/ Wolof - Pulaar	Trad.	Grade 3/38	339	9
L.1	Urban/ Wolof	Trad.	Grade 1/50	700 approx.	13 (3 Grade 1 classes)
L.2	Rural/Wolof	Trad.	Grade 1/45 90 with two Grade 1	551 (251 girls - 300 boys)	11
L.3	Rural/ Wolof	Trad.	Grade 2/24	151	6
L.4	Urban/ Wolof	Franco-Arabic	Grade 2/45	507 (235 girls - 272 boys)	12
L.5	Urban/ Wolof	Trad.	Grade 3/49	755 (391 girls- 364 boys)	13 (1 preschool class)
L.6	Urban/ Wolof	Private	Grade 3/44	452 including 71 'difficult' children	12
D.1	Urban/ Wolof	Trad.	Grade 1/64	807	12
D.2	Peri-urban/ Wolof	Trad.	Grade 1/64	951	12
D.3	Urban/ Wolof	Trad.	Grade 2/66	631	12
D.4	Urban/ Wolof	Bil.	Grade 2/32	330 (169 girls- 161 boys)	8
D.5	Peri-urban/ Wolof	Trad.	Grade 3/78	976	14
D.6	Peri-urban/ Wolof	Bil.	Grade 3/73	765 (378 girls - 387 boys)	12

Table 10.1: Data on schools and classes in which reading lessons were observed. K. = the Kaffrine region, L. = the Louga region and D. = the Dakar region.

CHAPTER 10

1. ANALYSIS OF THE TEACHING BY GRADE

TEACHING CONTENT IN GRADE 1

The participating schools in which the reading lessons were filmed are located in urban, rural and, in the Dakar region, peri-urban areas. Only one out of the six Grade 1 classes is multi-grade; consisting of 42 students. Overall, the Grade 1 classes are smaller in the Kaffrine region but much larger in the Dakar region. There are between 26 and 64 students in the Grade 1 classes with the most common spoken languages being Wolof, Bambara and Pulaar.

In the Kaffrine region, not all Grade 1 teachers have access to efficient/comprehensive training (programmes). In the Louga and Dakar regions, teachers either have the elementary teaching proficiency certificate (CEAP, Certificat élémentaire d'aptitude pédagogique) or the teaching proficiency certificate (CAP, Certificat d'aptitude pédagogique). The difference between these two qualifications is that teachers with a CAP have more professional experience than those with a CEAP. However, all the teachers included in the study have received continuing, competency-based training.

The materials used in Grade 1 are: *Sidi et Rama*; *Français, Langue et communication CI*; *Marie, Madi et le français, CI*; *Entre sons et sentences, Omar et Awa* and *L'Album d e lecture*.

Writings and texts to teach reading

The provenance of the texts used in the lessons is often unknown. Teachers say that they refer to *L'Album d e lecture* but that they consider the texts to be too difficult for Grade 1. During the interviews, it came to light that in one lesson two texts were invented by the teacher (interview 1). One of these texts (the description of Adama's house) comes from the textbook *Omar et Awa* and was modified to suit the needs of the teacher. Another text was selected from a textbook used in private schools. In two classes, the primary material used in the lesson did not come from a textbook. Instead, the students developed a little story or a single sentence orally, by doing role-plays using objects in the class.

Students' are made aware of the text presented on the blackboard, regardless of whether a title, or the authors name, is present. At times, illustrations assist students in deciphering the meaning of the text while other times they rely on the teacher (reading aloud) or reading on their own, to make sense of the text. The format of the text indicates a specific genre or type of text.

The lesson content is often written at the top of the blackboard, for example *Lecture* (Reading) or *Communication écrite* (Written communication), so that the students can anticipate what is expected of them. Since, the blackboard is used to teach all subjects, the teachers have adopted the practice of clearly displaying the lesson content on it.

In Grade 1, the reading lesson is based on[82] texts, excerpts of texts or sentences. One of the teachers says that he invented a story (see text 3). He then goes on to explain that the stories told by grandparents, begin with 'once upon a time' and end with a conclusion and a moral. An alternative reading model is also proposed to the students, one that is based on the texts found in the *L'Album d e lecture* collection. In another interview, a different teacher speaks about the reading model in terms of concrete experience related to the text so that the students would understand it (text 4).

When texts are used as the basis of the reading lesson, it can be assumed that they have been adapted, as evident in the texts used in the six classes filmed.

The first excerpt is an incomplete injunctive text:

> POUR FAIRE DU CARAMEL,
> FAIS FONDRE LE SUCRE DOUCEMENT.

(to make caramel, melt the sugar slowly)
Taken from *Français, Langue et communication*,
(p. 76), copied on the blackboard and reproduced here.

Four texts tell 'stories', and texts 2 and 3 are used in the same class:

Text 1:

> BOUBACAR EST UN JOLI BÉBÉ. SA MÈRE COUVRE
> SA TÊTE AVEC UN BONNET. IL DORT BEAUCOUP.

(Boubacar is a beautiful baby. His mother covers his head with a hat. He sleeps a lot.)
Copied from the blackboard.

Text 2 (start of the lesson):

> C'EST MARDI. LE MOUTON DE MAMAN A FAIM.
> OMAR ET AMI DONNENT DU PAIN AU MOUTON.

(It's Tuesday. Mama's sheep is hungry. Omar and Ami give the sheep bread.)
Copied from the blackboard.

Text 3 (end of the lesson), the text is accompanied by a chalk drawing:

> LE VOL C'EST SAMEDI MATIN. LEUK A FAIM. IL EST DANS LE JARDIN DE DAME LEUK.
> LEUK VOLE DE LA SALADE. OH ! DAME ARRIVE. LEUK COURT VITE.

(The theft/ It is Saturday morning. Leuk is hungry. He is in Dame's garden. Leuk steals a head of lettuce/ Oh!
Dame is coming. Leuk runs away quickly.)
Copied from the blackboard.

82- Most lessons start with a revision of the concepts studied without necessarily announcing the lesson that will follow. In all six classes, the exercises vary: sometimes students recite the days of the week or they write certain letters, syllables or words during a dictation, or they read words, syllables and letters (sounding out the phonemes they transcribe) that may or may not be linked to the words they wrote, or the students sound out vowels and consonants listed in a table.

Text 4, developed from a role-play situation:
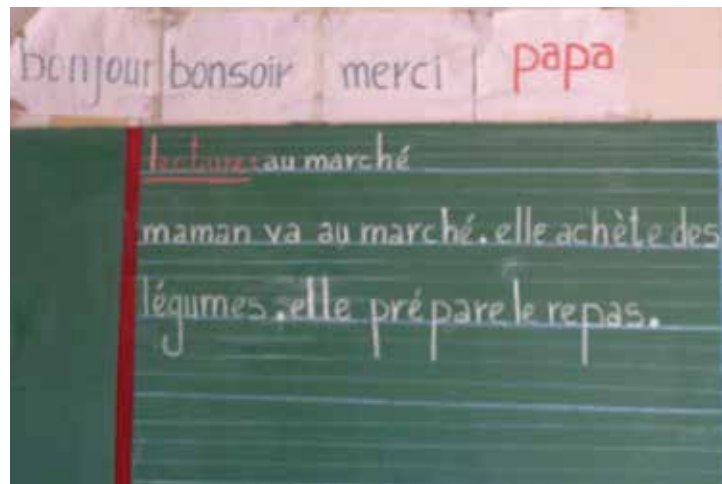

Figure 10.1: Photograph of the text on the blackboard

Text 5 describes Adama's house:

Figure 10.2: Photograph of the text on the blackboard

In one class, a sentence has been constructed from a role-play situation to initiate the reading lesson:

ABSA MANGE LA BANANE.

(Absa eats the banana.)
Sentence reproduced on the blackboard.

The texts and writings used in the class contain vocabulary that students are familiar with, orally, and have perhaps already encountered in writing to some extent. When texts contain new words, these are explained to the students. It is easy to understand these choices, because to be able to learn to read, students must know what the words mean.

Regarding the selection of writings and texts, the teachers sometimes work from the textbooks, which provide a broad range of texts depending on the textbook, or from a collection of texts that the students can look through at home. These published materials help students construct a written culture. Conversely, when textbooks are lacking, this construction is impeded. These textbooks serve as a study tool and allow students to practice their writing; exposing them to various dimensions of written culture.

It is rare for each student to have a textbook in class. Under these conditions, it is even more difficult for students to construct conceptions of texts and reading. The practice of presenting texts on the blackboard tends to standardize their appearance, cutting out important information such as the author of the text and the title, or ignoring details such as the use of a capital letter after a full stop, in keeping with the need to simplify prescribed by the curriculum.

Some schools are equipped with libraries, and texts are sometimes displayed on the classroom walls. However, the feedback given in the interviews indicates that the teachers rarely make use of these resources. It is also worth noting that the practice of teachers reading aloud, preceded or followed by discussions to foster oral comprehension, is rarely mentioned.

The comprehension of writings and texts

Work on reading comprehension seems to be very uneven. In general, the lesson begins with silent reading, of sentences or a text written on the blackboard, and then focuses on the comprehension of the words that compose them. Each student individually copies known or unknown words onto their slates. They then compare the words in groups, after which one representative from each group writes the words on the blackboard, trying to read them with the help of the teacher and the class. The teacher makes sure the students understand the meaning of the words and that they know how to correctly pronounce each word before asking comprehension questions on the sentences or text.

Regarding texts or sentences that `tell a story', the questions are about the place and time of the action, the action itself, the identification or characterization of the characters and, less frequently, the moral judgment that may be made of certain actions. A drawing is used in just one of the filmed classes, in an exercise where students are asked to predict what the story is about. As for the comprehension of injunctive sentences, such as in the above examples ('to make caramel, melt the sugar slowly'), the teacher starts by going through the steps of making caramel with the help of the students. The questions then focus on the utensils and ingredients needed, as well as on naming of the steps involved in the preparation. The emphasis is placed on the unfamiliar words previously identified by the students and less on the recipe structure, which first presents the ingredients and utensils needed and then the steps in the preparation.

The communicative dimension of the text is mentioned few times in the filmed lessons. In the example given above, the teacher tries to quickly explain the purpose of the text at the end of the lesson ('a text that asks us to do something'), contrasting it with a 'text that tells us a story'. The context in which a text of this kind is read (when we want to eat caramel, we read the recipe to find out what we need and how to make the caramel) is not mentioned, only the fact that students will be able to describe (orally) the steps of making caramel to their mothers. The function and nature (its durability) of the written text is therefore not emphasized. In other classes, recognized words and those that the students do not recognize are highlighted regardless of the communicative purpose. The descriptive purpose is accentuated by systematically listing the adjectives, although the perspective adopted to show the described place is not pointed out.

When studying the 'sound' featured in the key sentence, the teacher certainly takes care to ensure that the students understand the words of the sentence. The chosen words are taken from everyday language and, so they are easily grasped by students, they are often linked to material objects (the word banana with a banana, the word vegetable with various vegetables).

There is little evidence, in the collected data, of written comprehension activities in Grade 1, apart from the formal activities of identifying punctuation marks such as full stops, and counting the number of sentences. Such exercises define meaningful units that extend beyond the word without necessarily indicating its meaning. The practice of reading aloud, which features very strongly in the filmed lessons, testifies to the use of expressive and interpretive readings.

Mastering the code

Words are identified from a key sentence, taken from a text or a role-play situation. Students work on decomposing and recomposing the sentence. The word unit plays a big part in mastering the code. In most classes, the words are written through dictation, recognized in texts or writings, or identified as key words for the sound being studied, and explained if necessary. The word unit takes up a lot of the teaching time. This is to ensure that students understand the concept of 'word', the meaning of the word, and are able to decipher it. When reading aloud, it is common for the teacher or student to stress each word by pointing to it with a stick; the concept of word and the ability to segment the sentence into words are therefore clearly part of mastering the code. Nonetheless, no class seems to restrict itself to this unit and adopt a whole-word approach.

In all classes, the words are segmented into syllables, then the sound being studied is highlighted, copied and recognized. The technique of progressively isolating (and sometimes erasing) components, on the blackboard, is widely used. This technique proceeds as follows: in the key sentence, the words that do not contain the 'sound' being studied are erased; in the keyword, syllables that do not contain this 'sound' are erased; in the remaining syllable, only the 'sound' being studied is preserved. In one class, the starting point for the work on the code is the word which is then segmented into syllables to extract the sound, without going through the key sentence.

All the classes in this study work on syllabic blending in a very systematic manner, from the sound, even though the curriculum leaves it up to the teachers whether or not to use this method. The teachers seem to consider that it is essential for the students to understand syllabic blending in order to learn how to decipher words. This is illustrated by the example below (figure 3).

Figure 10.3: Photograph of phonograms already learned and noted on the blackboard

There are no phonological activities that focus on 'sounds' and their relationship to letters. A student is considered to have adequately identified a sound if they are able to produce or recognize words that contain this sound. The teachers refer to this as auditory and visual discrimination. In a class, sounds are identified solely on the basis of vowels and consonants, listed in a table.

In a number of classes, the lessons return to the word through syllabic blending. The student uses various syllables to form and read words. The students build from words to forming sentences, and from there to reading sentences or even (re)reading the text.

Synthesis

The teachers say that reading instruction starts from reading texts. However, in Grade 1, the teaching practice places the comprehension of words and the acquisition of vocabulary – derived from a sentence matching the students' standard of writing – as the focus of reading and writing activities. This concept is key to word recognition and learning to decipher words. For learners who are still not comfortable in French, this choice is understandable, if one considers that one cannot rely on the language spoken by the students. Deciphering is practised and understood through the segmentation and blending of syllables. Graphophonemic correspondences do not give rise to systematic phonological or phonemic activities.

There are very few activities in the classroom, that develop contact with written culture and comprehension of texts read in class. It is difficult for students to discern what the sentences, excerpts of texts and texts used in class are about. It is also notable that the illustrations that accompany the texts in the textbooks, which would help students anticipate the possible meanings of these writings, are not presented to the class. Moreover, it should be pointed out that in the few activities that are devoted to comprehension, the students are rarely asked to clarify or justify their answers in response to questions such as: 'Why do you think this is the word for flower?'; 'Why makes you say that something was stolen?'; 'What clues show us that this is an injunctive text?'. Correct answers are praised while incorrect answers are highlighted for correction.

TEACHING CONTENT IN GRADE 2

The Grade 2 reading lessons were filmed in a Franco-Arabic school, in, an urban bilingual class, and traditional classes in rural and urban settings. The class sizes vary strongly: as in Grade 1, there are more students in the urban classes than in the rural classes. The class size range from 24 to 66 students.

The teachers hold a CEAP or a CAP. One of the classes is part of the Associates in Research and Education for Development (ARED) project which, advocates the joint use of Wolof and French in reading instruction. The Grade-2 teachers seem better trained: is this just by chance?

The classroom materials cited by the teachers are: *Français. Langue et communication, CP*; *Sidi et Rama, CP*; *Marie, Madi et le français, CP*; *L'Album de lecture, CI-CP*; *Lecture-écriture ARED, CP*.

Writings and texts to teach reading

Reading activities, for the class, are taken from a textbook or collection of texts, and written on the blackboard. In four cases, the texts are written up on the blackboard (one is illegible in the film). In two cases, the texts are read by students from the textbooks, one is in a bilingual textbook and the other is in a French language textbook published in Senegal. The authors or speakers are not identified. The students know that it is the teacher who copied out the text but the situation in which the text is enunciated is not explained. The context in which such text could be found outside school is not given either. The title, when present, helps the student predict the communicative purpose and content of the text.

It was not possible to identify a title in the bilingual text translated for this study. Three of the texts displayed on the blackboard have one. The fourth presents the reading lesson. From figure 4, below, one can see that the copied messages are separated into paragraphs. Punctuation is also highlighted in one of the texts. None of the four texts on the blackboard is accompanied by an illustration or a drawing. The writings used in the lessons are (1) narrative text; (2) a descriptive text (the bike) and (3) a text presenting rules for behaviour (referred to as an 'environmental nursery rhyme' by the authors of the textbook; see below). One of the stories talks about the work of a bricklayer. It draws on lexical knowledge and syntactic structures that are simpler than those in the other texts, provided the students have worked on the technical terms (cement, wheelbarrow, etc.) during the basic science and environmental sustainability lessons that teach them about professions. The texts drawn from *Marie, Madi et le français* are longer and more complex (texts 3 and 5).

Three stories are used as the basis for lessons (see images below).

Text 1:

Figure 10.4: Photograph of the text on the blackboard

Text 2:
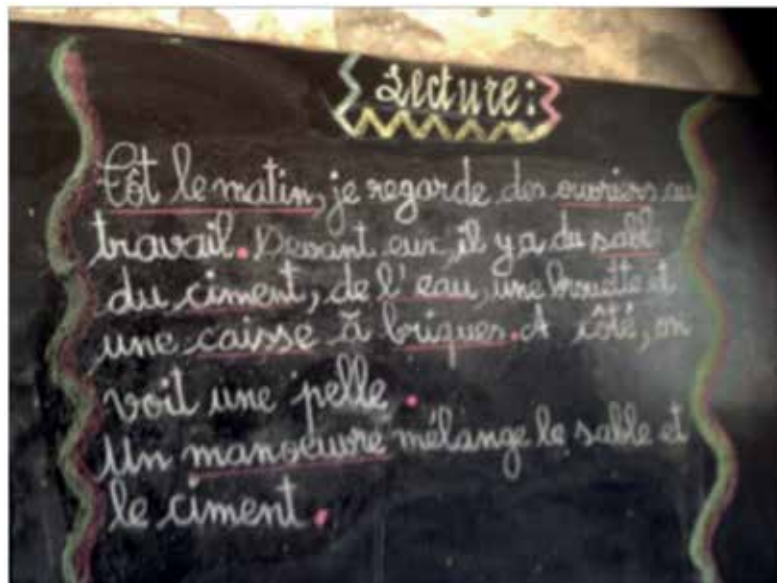
Figure 10.5: Photograph of the text on the blackboard

Text 3:
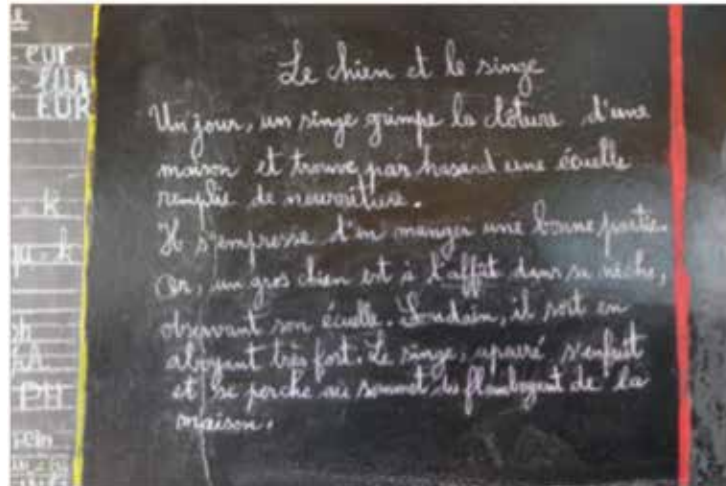
Figure 10.6: Photograph of the text taken from Marie, Madi et le français, Grade 2 (p. 88), transcribed onto the blackboard without the illustrations

Text 4: a descriptive text in Wolof and its translation[83]
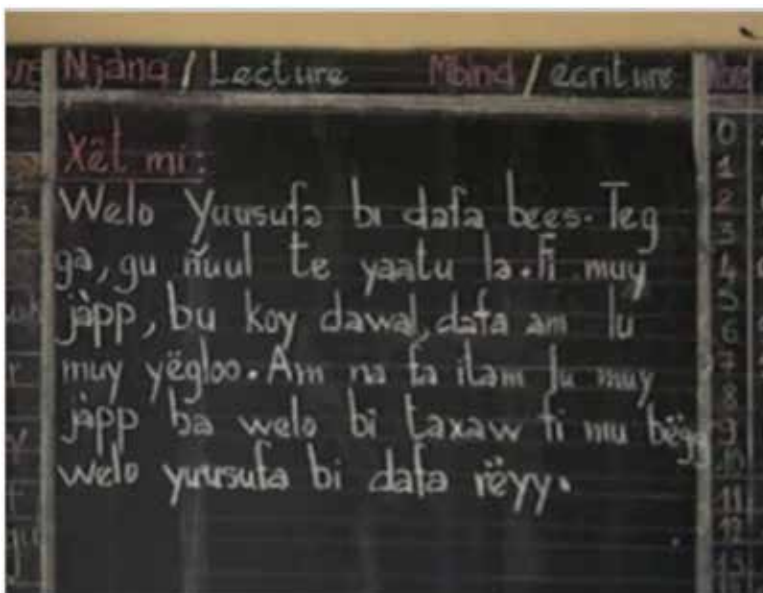
Figure 10.7:
Photograph of the text on the blackboard in Wolof (left).

Le vélo de Youssoupha est neuf. Sa selle est noire et large. Là où il s'agrippe pour le conduire, il y a quelque chose qui lui permet de se faire entendre. Il y a également quelque chose qu'il empoigne pour arrêter le vélo là où il veut. Le vélo de Youssoupha est grand.

(Youssoupha has a new bike. The saddle is black and wide. Where he holds on to steer there is something that makes a noise. There is also something he can pull to stop the bike wherever he wants Youssoupha's bike is big.)

Transcription of the text on to the black board, in a bilingual class with accompanying English translation (right)

83- Text drawn from a textbook not available for consultation. It was provided in translation and no information about how the text is formatted is available. The technical terms to describe a bicycle do not exist in Wolof. The words guidon (handlebar), frein (brake) and klaxon (horn) are missing, they are not borrowed from French but described through circumlocutions.

Text 5, setting rules for behaviour:

Figure 10.8: Photograph of a page from the textbook Marie, Madi et le français (p. 58)

All the proposed texts have been simplified for reading instruction: they are often written in the present, even the stories. Sometimes, the past tense (*passé composé*) is used (for the text entitled *Le paludisme* (Malaria) when warranted by the time of the narrative.

Where the initiation into written culture is concerned, the textbook uses a layout that may facilitate the identification of multiple signs. This in turn helps in directing the reader's activity, his or her expectations and the comprehension of the task, provided that these signs are systematically highlighted and explained in class.

Only some schools are equipped with libraries. Teachers tend to let students attend the library on their own when there is one available.

Written and textual comprehension

A text-based approach was observed in classes where the reading lessons were filmed. This approach is essentially formal and often guided by a reading grid. Students are asked about the title of the text, how it is structured into paragraphs, the numbering of sentences and some lexical units (known/unknown words, adjectives). Students work individually or in groups. These formal tracking exercises sometimes conclude with the identification of the type of text (e.g. recipes, newspaper articles etc.). In all cases, they leave little room for detailed comprehension questions about the text or the meaning that a word takes in the text. Questions of this type feature in some of the classes. For example, a teacher asks: what is this text talking about?

How do we know that the workers are bricklayers? (They use cement, water, a shovel, a wheelbarrow). Or: 'What is the person speaking doing? He is telling a story about bricklayers.' How students respond indicates their ability to identify the text type. The text on malaria is tackled in the same way: first the teacher reads it aloud (pointing to the words) and then it is read by a few students who are good readers; finally, it is approached through questions on the content, the state of the character who is sick and what is done to cure him.

The work on texts focuses on reading words and the comprehension of sentences rather than on the finer comprehension of the text. Students systematically track unknown words that are at times explained in the context. Most frequently, the meaning of the word is mimed and linked to an everyday object or action. The word is linked to the thing. For example, to explain the French word *fagot* (bundle of sticks), the teacher invokes the image of the mother who collects wood and branches and ties them in bundles. He isolates the word from the context without going back to the latter. The injunction 'coupe pas les arbres pour faire des fagots' (don't cut down trees to make sticks) is not connected to the word.

The approach used to explain the meaning of the words, makes it difficult for students to understand its inferential or figurative meaning. Furthermore, the intention of the text is often overlooked. Where the first example is concerned, when the authors of the textbook label the text as an 'environmental nursery rhyme' it doesn't make the teacher's job any easier. Students found it difficult to recognize the text type: some named it as a narrative, others as an injunctive type. The teacher opted for a poetic text or a nursery rhyme, in keeping with the title provided by the authors. The latter also recommend having students learn the nursery rhyme by heart and recite it. An exercise of this kind may help students learn how to orally formulate an injunction as it teaches them how intonation is used to express the intention of the text. This is inferred by the teacher-led read-aloud at the end of lesson. Injunctions are accentuated and the tone hints at the intention of the text. This read-aloud differs from the one done sentence by sentence to correct the reading grid. However, the instructions in the textbook and the guide (which the teacher didn't receive) do not help the teacher.

Mastering the code

In Grade 2, the code is taught in a similar way to Grade 1; it also takes place at the initial phase. The same approach, based on progressive isolation, is used: from text to key sentence, from key sentence to keyword, from keyword to key syllable and from the latter to the 'sound'. For example, in the key sentence example below, the word *pelle* (spade) is the key word, and *elle* the grapheme to be learned.

Figure 10.9: Transcription of a sentence drawn from a text onto the blackboard

Syllabic blending is also practised but less systematically, and only if the need arises, as stipulated in the guide and stated by the teachers. The use of syllabic blending is observed in the two Franco-Arabic classes and in the bilingual classes taught in Wolof. This is evident from one of the interviews (interview 1) where the lessons, taught in French, repeat syllabic blending from of French words.

It is important to note that the 'sounds' in Grade 2 differ from those in Grade 1. In one of the Franco-Arabic classes, the lesson was about the phonogrammic variations of the sound /s/. The graphemes s, ss, c and ç were progressively presented in a syllabic blending exercise, which also looked at the distinction between the graphemes that transcribe the sounds /s/ and /k/ based on the graphemic context of the syllable in which they are found (vowels: a, o, u, e, i).

In the other classes, students completed exercises on other 'sounds': elle, ette, enne, esse or pl, fl, bl, gl, cl and so on. Consonant clusters required syllabic blending, which is needed less for graphemes (end of word or affix). For a francophone reader, it is surprising to see these graphemes referred to as *sounds* given that they are sometimes formed of two written syllables. Corrective phonetics seem to be the justification for this decision. However, it is possible that the concept of *sound* remains quite opaque for students. As there is no evidence of activities based on the phonological or phonemic analysis of words, there is little chance that the concept is clearly understood. The concept of syllable is certainly much better grasped by students, even if it is sometimes also referred to as *sound*.

In Grade 2, students continue to complete activities focused on reconstructing sentences in print and cursive on their slates, as well as copying or word recognition exercises. Reading aloud, either by the teacher or by the students, is modelled on the method used in Grade 1: each sentence is segmented into words, the reader points to each word and the final syllables are stressed.

Throughout the reading lessons, it is rare to hear the teacher ask a student to justify an answer or to explain the presence of a given word or letter. It should also be pointed out that students find it difficult to justify their answers when such a request is made.

CHAPTER 10

Synthesis

In Grade 2, the texts and text excerpts that the students are exposed to, contribute little to forming a reading project or to anticipating the content of what is read. A diverse range of texts and the presence of the textbook in some classes certainly assists in creating a written culture. It seems that the teachers draw more on texts than they do in Grade 1. They expect the students to be able to read them, at least in part, with the assistance of a reading grid. However, in the filmed lessons where textual comprehension is emphasized, it is not possible to determine whether students have fully understood the texts they are reading. One cannot form a clear opinion based on the group work conducted in class. In two of the classes, the teacher's questions' focus on the comprehension of the text, while in the others the approach to the text is more formal (e.g. targeting the title, unknown words and the number of paragraphs).

Reading aloud (whether by the teacher or the students) or memorizing appear to serve as techniques to reveal the communicative intention of the texts. Nonetheless, it seems that reading aloud is used most frequently to work on reading fluency and word identification.

Vocabulary knowledge is developed through role-play activities and in reference to real-world objects. It does not seem to be connected with the communicative intention of the texts read.

Mastering the code follows a similar approach to that in Grade 1. What differs is the relative difficulty of the graphemes or consonant clusters. The exercises on graphemes focus on orthographic complexity, the principle of phonogrammic versatility and consonant clusters, highlighting the link between orthographic difficulties and auditory discrimination.

In Grade 2, work on oral language seems to no longer be as important. The teacher expects the students to speak French. Wolof or another national language are only to be used if the students get stuck. Some teachers do not allow national languages. A teacher uses the symbol[84], displayed for all to see, when a student speaks in a national language in class. Another teacher says that he doesn't hesitate to use it if it means the students learn French better.

The lesson conducted in Wolof is no different from other Grade 2 lessons. During the lesson, no comparisons are made between Wolof and French. According to the teacher, comparisons are introduced once the students have completed the lesson in both Wolof and French. The comprehension of the text must be checked in both languages, as must the analysis of the key sentence and syllabic blending, which must be done in both languages. The concepts must be learned in each language in order for a comparison to be possible.

TEACHING CONTENT IN GRADE 3

The schools in which the Grade-3 reading lessons were filmed are located in urban or peri-urban areas. All teachers for whom data was gathered are qualified (i.e. with CAP). One of the classes is part of the Associates in Research and Education for Development (ARED) project, which, advocates for alternating between Wolof and French for reading instruction. From the interview it is apparent that the teachers complete both preparatory and continuing training for bilingual classes.

84- The symbol is a physical object, for example a bone, that the sanctioned student must wear in full sight of the rest of the class.

Essential components to the teacher training system include: a technical team of professionals with a specialized instructor, teacher meetings and a logbook to record questions that arise during lessons.

According to the teacher, the purpose of the training is to learn to read and write in Wolof, to use the textbooks and to develop a standard terminology for grammar whose construction is still ongoing. Technical terms must regularly be stabilized in Wolof; because they do not exist in the language they must be borrowed from French or adapted from the spoken language. The teacher in charge of the bilingual class was previously involved in the Stratégies actives pour la réussite d'une école novatrice en Afrique (Active Strategies for Successfully Innovative Schooling in Africa, SARENA) project[85].

The materials used by teachers in the reading lessons are: the textbook *Sidi et Rama, CE1; L'album de lecture 2e* étape; and the textbook *ARED, Lecture-écriture, 2e* étape, *niveau 1*, but without the guide it seems. The *Curriculum d'éducation de base, 2e* étape (2008) is also a reference for lesson planning.

In the bilingual class, the students have the textbook in Wolof; in the other classes, students do not have the textbook in hand.

Class sizes vary greatly, from 38 to 78 students, the urban and peri-urban classes in Dakar being the largest.

Concerning written culture and texts

The materials used in the classes are derived from a variety of sources. Most are transcribed onto the blackboard or onto a sheet of paper. Only one of the two bilingual classes work directly from the textbook. The recording[86] shows a text accompanied by an illustration, which fit onto one page. The students in the bilingual class benefit from the textbook layout, which, on one page, presents a descriptive text with an illustration, a title and the body of the text such as it is drafted by the textbook authors, and then has various exercises on the facing page. However, no indication is given regarding the source of the text or its author.

In the other classes, the materials are copied onto the blackboard and, in one classroom or onto a sheet of paper.

It is important to examine the texts written on the blackboard. The first example from the blackboard is an injunctive text. The manner in which this particular lesson is conducted highlights certain habits that are specific to the class. A reading lesson is announced. It will be based on a text that students read and work on, with a particular focus on its components, identified by the layout and use of colours. It is presented as follows[87]:

85- A joint Quebecois and Senegalese project.

86- The text and textbook in Wolof are not available, nor is the French translation.

87- This approximate reproduction was carried out by the authors of the monograph. The font was chosen to imitate cursive script.

LECTURE
TEXTE : LA DÉCOCTION DE BISSAP ET DE BOUYE

Il faut:	**Il faut:**
du bissap du pain de singe (bouye) de l'eau du sucre	- Verser deux poignées de fruit de bissap dans un bol. - Ajouter la même quantité de pain de singe - Les laver proprement et mettre dans une cafetière. - Ajouter un demi verre d'eau. - Faire bouillir. - Laisser refroidir et bien sucrer.

Figure 10.10. (Reading/Text: The decoction of roselle and baobab/You need roselle, monkey bread [baobab], water and sugar/ - Pour two handfuls of roselle into a bowl./ - Add the same quantity of monkey bread./ - Wash them thoroughly and place them in a coffee pot./ - Add half a glass of water./ - Bring to the boil./ - Let it cool down, add plenty sugar./ - Drink a glass before going to bed.)

The transcription of the text on the blackboard announces a classroom activity and enables the students to anticipate what kind of text they will be reading and studying (a recipe). However, the reader cannot predict what answer the text provides or even the questions or problems it addresses. For example, the drink is described by a technical term (decoction) that suggests a medicinal use, but it is doubtful that students will be able to understand this term or what purpose the drink serves.

The other texts are descriptive texts of locations (a house, a workshop, a room). An almost identical description of a room is given in two classrooms, in different regions. The texts below are also sometimes presented as reading lessons, however the title of the text is not reproduced. Sometimes the punctuation is highlighted in red. These elements (whether highlighted or absent) provide an indication of the lesson content.

Descriptive text 1:
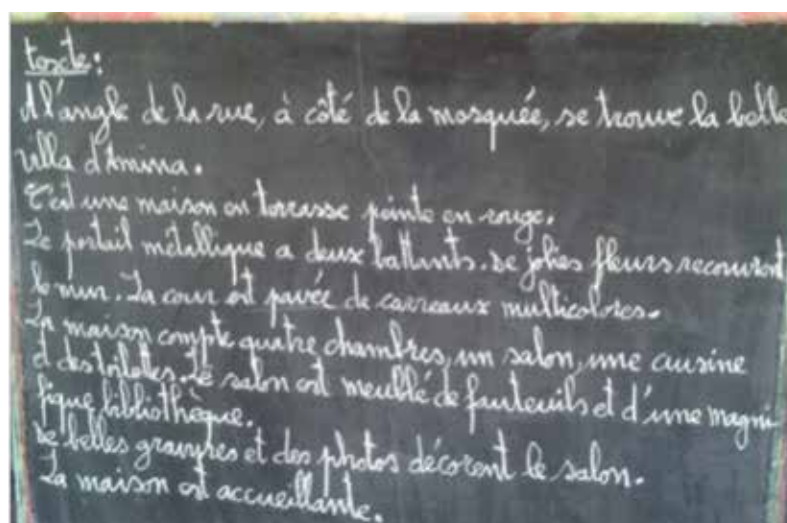
Figure 10.11: Transcription of the text onto the blackboard

Descriptive text 2:
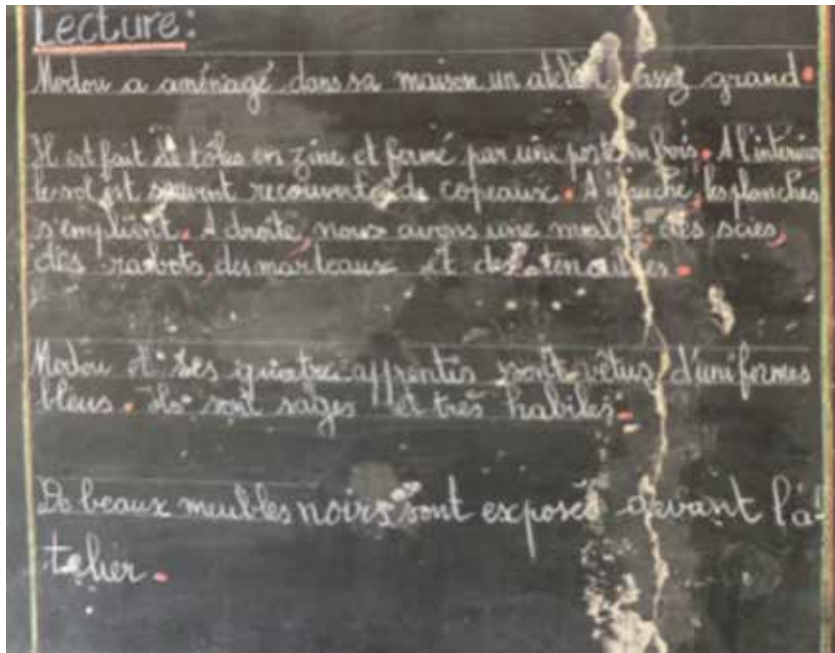
Figure 10.12: Transcription of the text onto the blackboard

Descriptive text 3:

Figure 10.13: Transcription of the text onto the blackboard

Regarding the text that is typed up on a computer, it is both distributed to students on paper and transcribed onto the blackboard. In both cases, the title is centred, announcing a descriptive text. The body of the text is divided into three paragraphs. On the printed copy, the title, which is slightly modified, is indicated in bold.

Une belle petite chambre

Dans sa grande famille, Sadikh et son petit frère occupent une belle petite pièce.
Des deux côtés de la porte et sous l'unique fenêtre, sont posés de jolis pots de fleurs .La chambre est propre et bien décorée.
Sur le mur sont fixées de belles photos. On y trouve aussi un lit, deux chaises et une petite table en bois rouge.de grands rideaux blancs couvrent la fenêtre et la porte.
La chambre de Sidi est très accueillante

Figure 10.14: Reproduction of the text distributed to students

All the reproduced texts are studied as specific text types or genres and also serve as the basis for classroom exercises. They are aimed at students. Their presentation rarely announces a communicative intention. What use will be made of these materials in the Grade 3 lessons filmed for this study?

Use of the teaching materials and textual comprehension

The materials selected by the teachers (either those listed in the curriculum or approved by the school authorities) show that the approach seeks to be discursive and linked to a typology of texts. The text type is to be identified by the students, either during the filmed lesson or in the session that follows. What do the teachers say during the lessons regarding the intention of the text?

For the injunctive text, different questions are asked, such as: What can we do? What will we do? What do we need? The teacher emphasizes actions: the things one can do if one has the necessary elements. There are no questions about the speaker, the recipient of the text or the recipient's situation. The fact that the excerpt displayed on the blackboard lacks the preliminary information written under the title in the textbook, 'Pour calmer la toux, prépare une décoction comme l'indique le texte' (To soothe coughing, prepare a decoction as explained in the text), points to a more formal treatment of text. The absence of illustrations and the layout used on the blackboard reinforce this interpretation.

Figure 10.15: Reproduction of the original page of reading textbook CE1-CE2

The textbooks from which the descriptive texts are drawn are treated similarly. The approach is identical in the bilingual classes.
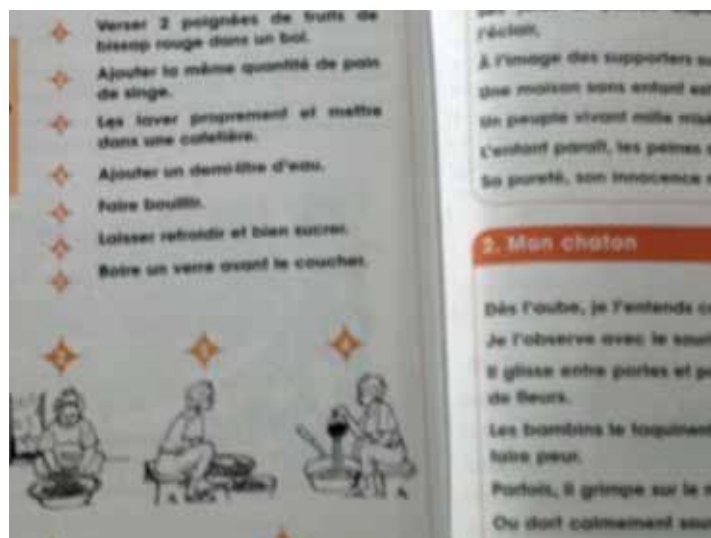
The questions focus on what is described (the interior of the workshop, the hunter, the exterior and interior of the house), on what is in the workshop, the room or the house. In one case, there is a question about the genre of the text, a portrait.

The discovery phase of the text focuses on surface cues. The organization of the text is highlighted in most of the filmed lessons. The students' attention is drawn to the two parts of the injunctive text, the ingredients and the preparation. Similarly, the teacher points out the paragraphs describing the room, the workshop and the house and then how the description shifts from the global (the workshop, the exterior of the house) to the specific (the objects found in the workshop or the house). The same logic applies to the study of the textual units. The teaching system, collective- or group-based, does not modify the approach. Students must identify the title, if there is one, the author, the punctuation and the verbs. They must sometimes note or name words that serve to situate the objects, or that which make the room pretty, for example. These terms will be designated by their grammatical category (adjectives, connectors) in the course of the lesson. In the injunctive text, the verbs in the infinitive are pointed out (highlighted in the text with an upper case letter in red) as is the sentence structure: infinitive verb + noun. In the descriptive texts, the verb tenses (present), the sentence types (affirmative), the spatial connectors and the type of text are all pointed out. Once the different units have been identified (e.g. the punctuation marks used in the text), the proper terminology is used when referring to them. Students repeat this process to memorize this terminology. However, these units are not related to the communicative purpose of the text. For example, the teacher may point out the absence of exclamatory and interrogative sentences in the descriptive text, but no justification in relation to the communicative purpose of the text is given. Their function in the text genres that comprise descriptions is also not explained.

The time devoted to analysis varies between the lessons. Sometimes it takes up most of the lesson (for example, for the analysis of the injunctive text and in the two lessons using descriptive texts). Other times, the construction of the reference takes up a larger share of the lesson time. In all the lessons, there are some questions about what the text describes and prescribes. For example, the description of the workshop and the house gives rise to a condensed reformulation of each paragraph. Regarding the description of the workshop, the teacher points out that the first paragraph tells us where it is, the second describes it, the third describes Modou and his apprentices, and the fourth talks about the exterior of the workshop. The description of the room leads into the identification of the objects and characters found within it. As for the text on *La belle villa d'Amina* (Amina's Beautiful Villa), the tracking exercise focuses on the elements that describe the location of the house (first paragraph), its exterior (second paragraph) and its interior (third paragraph).

It is important to highlight that there is no systematic emphasis on having the students comprehend the text from the perspective of a common reference. Students must understand the meaning of the text through silent reading (in five classes) and/or through a teacher-led read-aloud (in three classes). Perhaps the teachers consider that it suffices for students to acquire formal knowledge of the text by studying how language functions for them to understand the text and grasp its communicative intention.

In all lessons the students use an analytical grid. A good comprehension of the text is not always required for the students to identify the various formal points (punctuation, verb tense, types of sentence).

The lesson in Wolof is almost identical to the other lessons and lexical knowledge must also be verified in Wolof. For example, the teacher asks the students to pick out so-called 'difficult' words. It is clear that the words *Est* (East), one of the four cardinal points, or *bredouille* (empty-handed), as in the sentence *le chasseur rentre bredouille* (the hunter came back empty-handed), are not understood. Similarly, the students do not understand what is meant by a half-dark, half-light complexion. At the start of a lesson, a student uses the word *fusil* (gun) when he is actually talking about an arrow.

Teaching the code and language

In Grade 3, mastery of the code is not explicitly mentioned, other than in relation to the students reading aloud. Students stumble on words containing sounds that are difficult to pronounce[88] (e.g. *zing*), or on non-verbal or verbal endings (e.g *zing*, *assez*, *s'empilent*[89]). The teacher corrects the students and has them repeat the correct pronunciation, but does not take the time to explain or justify the correction. The focus seems to be on reading fluency, characterized by good pronunciation, pauses and an intonation that is adapted to the text.

The treatment of multilingualism

In the Grade 3 lessons, the teachers barely use any Wolof during reading lessons in French. Sometimes they reformulate instructions. It is assumed that the students can read more or less fluently in French and that they understand the texts they are asked to read.

In the lesson conducted in Wolof, at no time is there any reference to French. The way things are named is not discussed. For example, in Wolof the teacher refers to the 'head' of the text when speaking about the title, but no comparison is made with the equivalent French term (*titre*). Perhaps this is obvious to the students and the teacher that it is not drawn attention to.

In one of the interviews, the teacher reveals that comparisons are made at specific times within the classroom, which the teacher refers to as 'anchoring'. Following two or three sessions spent on a text, the students are sufficiently familiar with the text to analyse it in French. Some grammatical concepts require an 'anchoring'. When they are studied in Wolof they are also studied in French, or vice versa.

Synthesis

In all the classes, reading instruction is organized in relation to text types or genres. The texts presented to the students tend to be slightly modified or are missing sections, (due to copying from the textbook to blackboard, or on to paper). These modifications have an impact on the reading process and on the predictions that students

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88- In Wolof, the term *zing* is close to French. According to the teacher, it does not seem to cause comprehension problems.

89- The incorrect use is due to the teacher.

make regarding the texts they are asked to read. The impact is further accentuated when the text is truncated (such as the text on the preparation of the decoction to soothe coughing) or rendered less cohesive due to modifications.

The students analyse the texts through a formal approach. In addition to the work on the surface of the text, the lessons include, questions that build a common reference and comprehension of what the text is about. In five classes out of six, the students focus on discovering the text through silent reading.

Conducting reading instruction in Wolof does not resolve the issue of comprehension: words are still difficult to understand and require an explanation, especially given that the technical terms are not known by the students or don't exist in Wolof.

The teachers do not make any use of students' multilingualism to point out linguistic characteristics or make comparisons. It seems that such methods were used in bilingual education but were not observed in the filmed lessons. Based on the feedback given by the teachers during the interviews, once, the same lesson has been given in both Wolof and French, comparisons can be made.

The analysis of the Grade 3 lessons also highlights the fact that students are rarely asked to justify or explain their answers, or to point out the features in the text that prompted their answers, whether right or wrong. Nor was their appreciation or opinion of the texts solicited.

2. ANALYSIS OF THE PROGRESSION OF READING INSTRUCTION THROUGH THE GRADES

Analysis of the reading lessons shows a progression through Grade 1, 2 and 3. This progression can be observed in several ways: through the presence of national languages, or in terms of the language lessons, the text and the code. As the lessons progress, the teachers seem to resort to Wolof less and less, unless it is a bilingual class and the teacher perceives a need to use Wolof. The link between language lessons and reading lessons seems to progressively fade. It is clear that a great deal of attention is given to the comprehension of words in Grade 1. This emphasis lessens in Grade 2 and further still in Grade 3. The practice of highlighting known and unknown words in texts, often by the students themselves, does not guarantee that the other words in the text are read and understood. However, this assumption must be seen in perspective. It is difficult to draw conclusions from just one reading lesson, but some of the answers given by the student's point to difficulties with the mastery of words. It is perhaps traditional for language lessons to be linked more to the production of writing. To prepare students to write sentences or short texts, the lessons perhaps no longer systematically work on the oral production and comprehension of words.

The texts and text excerpts the students are given to read do not change much in terms of type, but their difficulty and length increases. The way the various texts are recited simultaneously in the language spoken by the students, as well as in French, does little to support this progression or rather increase in difficulty. For instance, in the course of this study there is no reference to the practice of having the teacher read texts aloud in paraphrased French, followed by comments and discussion in Wolof. Was it not shown or explained in the interviews? Is one to understand that it is still discouraged or prohibited?

What does emerge is that less knowledge of texts is constructed by students. At school, they at least benefit from exposure to different types of texts. This is not sufficient, however, for them to understand these texts. Priority is given to formal knowledge and knowledge of certain textual units. These units seem to rarely be linked to the intention of the text, something that a competent reader should be able to perceive: what the author wants the reader to see and feel through a description, the spatial and temporal dimensions of the world created by the choice of words in a narrative and the actions that take place therein, or to the instructions addressed to the reader in a prescriptive text. The formal approach greatly reduces the communicative scope of texts. There is a notable tendency to apply the same analytical framework to different types or genres of texts.

The teachers seem to work on the comprehension of words from Grade 1 to Grade 3. In practice this entails explaining words extracted from texts. Teachers use miming gestures or show physical objects to explain meanings. These explanations remain decontextualized as the teachers rarely go back to the texts or do exercises based on reformulating the words in the text.

In terms of the code and linguistic concepts, the progression is striking: in Grade 1, students complete exercises on whole-word recognition and learn simple phonograms (graphemes). Through syllabic blending they learn to decipher. The emphasis is placed on the concept of words and syllables. They do not do exercises on phonological awareness. In Grade 2, the number of phonograms learned per week increases significantly. The lessons focus on spelling difficulties, pronunciation difficulties for non-francophone students or consonant clusters, an important aspect of French phonetics that teachers are frequently reminded of in the curricular documents.

One may conclude that the progression is more discontinuous than continuous, even though the approaches and activities change little (the technique of progressive isolation, reconstructing sentences on slates, or the use of an almost identical reading grid from one grade to the next).

3. OTHER REMARKS

The presence of libraries was observed in some of the schools visited. The book borrowing system seems to be based on letting parents and students take the initiative. The teachers leave it to the students to look up information or to find books. Incorporating such tasks in lessons would help foster a written culture, but it proves difficult in overcrowded classes.

Figure 10.16: Photograph of a school library

A professional know-how is evident in the use of the blackboard in the reading lessons. The teachers have six or seven students come up to the board at the same time to write their answers, checking their comprehension of the text or the task. Dynamic lessons, mobilizing the students' attention, are presented with the blackboard and slates. There seems to be less proficiency in the use of textbooks and group activities. It seems that many students wait passively, without reading the textbook or without writing on their slate before the student at the board writes the answer.

The use of these traditional teaching methods begs the question of what is retained once the blackboard and slates have been erased. If students do not have a copy of the textbook, which seems to be the case in the majority of classes, creating a booklet of the texts used in class would provide a useful record.

Reading comprehension seems like a poor cousin of reading instruction. In Grade 1 and 2, it is characterized by the comprehension of words, considered in isolation from the text. The different types of texts that students are asked to read emphasize a formal and discursive approach. Different text genres, similar to those used in the social practices to which they refer, would provide the students with other, less abstract cultural references. The formal approach to texts is further amplified by the items listed in the analysis grid. This is one tool that should be redesigned to highlight dimensions of the texts that students read in terms of: their content, the textual organization of the content and how it is put into words. Without this step it is difficult for students to understand the communicative intention of the texts they read and, therefore, the social implications of reading.

It is important to note that teachers, who base their lessons on text types and a grid, use the materials and tools that are recommended by the educational authorities (for the grid, see for example *CEB 2e étape*, 2008, p. 65). In Grade 1 and 2, clear priority is given to the units of *word* and *syllable*. And also to *graphemes*. The standard approach is that of a mixed whole-word method. To work on meaning, it is important to focus on it in context of the sentence. However, little work is done on the unit of the *phoneme*. The lessons contain no exercises based on the identification, removal or replacement of phonemes, or on finding different words with phonemes studied in class. One cannot blame the teachers as these types of activities or exercises are rarely proposed, if at all, in the materials or guides available to them.

Moreover, it is also important to note that the teaching guides designed to accompany the textbooks are rarely distributed. As a result, it becomes impossible to use the textbooks in the approach recommended by the authors. This situation is compounded by the fact that there is no training course on how to use the available textbooks for teachers, even though there is a desire for such a course.

Finally, the reference to national languages seems to disappear very quickly, except as a last resort. The use of national language in the classroom still seems to be viewed as something that is prohibited. For example, in one of the classes, the practice of making students wear a punishment 'symbol' is still in use.

It is important to acknowledge that Senegal has been engaged in the process of developing quality schooling, for many years. There are many reminders of this journey on display. The mural in the photo shown below, attests to this.

Figure 10.17: Mural featuring Jean Piaget and Léopold Sédar Senghor in a classroom

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

While bearing in mind the conditions in which the data was collected, it is possible to conclude the analysis of the lessons with the following key points:

1- The texts, excerpts of texts and sentences written on the blackboard are incontestably the starting point for the work on the code and reading comprehension in the filmed lessons. Drawn from the teaching materials, adapted and sometimes created by the teachers, these three units of meaning constitute the material of the reading lessons done in the classroom. This principle seems to apply regardless of the language of instruction.

2- In terms of curricular progression, the texts and excerpts that students are asked to read vary little from a typological point of view. However, their lexical and syntactic difficulties as well as their length increase. The text types selected for the lessons correspond to the curricular guidelines (CEB, 2008), which advocate a discursive approach.

3- In Grade 1 and 3, the approach used for texts and excerpts prioritize the comprehension of words and sentences, along with vocabulary acquisition and memorization. In a second language especially, vocabulary plays an important role in the comprehension of writing. The comprehension of texts in national languages or in French is built on a broader lexical comprehension, related to the context and the text. However, the lessons do not draw attention to the communicative intention of texts, the context in which they are produced and read or the reader's project, and how these relate to lexical comprehension. In Grade 1, the emphasis is placed on overall comprehension and whole-word recognition, which the students first work on orally and then learn to decipher. In Grade 2, students must understand sentences drawn from a text and identify unknown words. These words are explained in relation to real-world objects but not connected to the intention of the text from which they are extracted. In Grade 3, the texts are approached from the perspective of their formal characteristics, the intention rarely being explained. There are gaps in the progression from Grade 1 to Grade 3 and thus there is a lack in continuity in the lessons taught.

4- When students work on reading comprehension and excerpts of texts, little attention is devoted to building a common reference. Overall, comprehension takes up a small part of what is covered in class. This state of affairs is not explained by the collective working method, or the question-answer format used in class. The students, who are, at times, arranged in groups, are not asked to imagine the possible meanings of a text (that may have been read silently or aloud by the teacher) nor to talk about it within their group, or collectively as a class.

5- The practice of reading aloud features in all the filmed lessons, across the three grades. When done by students, its purpose is to work on reading fluency and word identification. When done by the teacher, expressively, it may serve as a means for the students to perceive the communicative intention of the sentences and texts they read.

6- Work on the code dominates Grade 1 and 2. The approach taken emphasizes word and syllable units and uses a mixed whole-word method, which involves segmentation and syllabic blending. Graphophonemic correspondence is not addressed from a phonological point of view. In Grade 1, the lessons focus on learning the alphabetic principle. In Grade 2, the instruction is oriented towards spelling difficulties in French. In Grade 3, deciphering seems to be taught at the start of the year, if deemed necessary (based on interview feedback).

7- In some classes, the teachers spend time making sure that the concepts used in reading instruction are properly understood. The concepts of *syllable*, *word* and *sentence* are presented and defined, and the teachers check they have been understood by the students. The concept of *sound* is not as clear. It varies from one grade to another: sometimes it refers to a phoneme, sometimes to a consonant cluster, and sometimes to a syllable or even to two written syllables. The letters of the alphabet are sometimes

named. The difference between letter, grapheme, the name of the letter and 'sound' (phoneme) is blurred by the discourse constructed in class.

8- There seems to be no distinction in the approach to reading instruction in traditional and bilingual classes. Students work on the code and the comprehension of texts in Wolof and French, in accordance with the curricular requirement (CEB, 2008). No comparisons between the two languages are observed in the filmed lessons. This is one limitation of the data collection system. There is little reference to national languages in the traditional classrooms. These languages, Wolof in particular, serve as a stopgap solution for teachers, and are only used when the students run into comprehension difficulties. Sometimes, their use is still prohibited. In bilingual lessons, French does not serve as a reference or discussion point. Specific technical words seem to be translated into Wolof by circumlocutions. They are not introduced in French. The ARED model advocates alternating the instruction, which involves going through the lessons in both languages before drawing parallels and comparisons. The circumlocutions used in Wolof to describe technical terms are not pointed out in class in any way that would heighten students' awareness of the wealth of means and resources that languages possess.

9- Blackboards and slates are the media of choice when it comes to teaching and learning how to read. They are used to assist students in sounding out graphemes and to check comprehension of words, sentences, text or tasks. These media are useful for drills and practice, but as they are constantly wiped clean throughout the lesson, they do not provide students with any record of the texts read and the learning achieved in the classroom.

10- Students' ability to memorize content in class is not helped by the types of revision exercises observed in classrooms. The recap of the lesson content takes the form of a repetition that goes back over what was seen in class, a kind of evaluation of the general content. A recap of this kind is rarely grounded in what was done the day before so as to link content already worked on with coming content. At the end of the lesson the class recites nursery rhymes or does speaking activities accompanied by gestures. This signals a change of subject and teaching content. The end of the lesson makes no mention of what will be done in the next French, or reading lesson. It is hard for students to construct a memory of the content covered in class in such conditions. It should be noted that these forms of repetition are recommended by the curriculum. Students rarely have a textbook, which limits their contact with writing to the blackboard, the slates, and occasionally, the posters on the classroom wall. The textbook guides, which are a precious resource when it comes to planning lessons, are too rarely given to teachers who, moreover, are not trained to use them.

11- Books, albums and other written materials may be discovered through the writings displayed in class, and by attending the school library. The latter form of initiation to written culture assumes that schools have a library, which is rarely the case. The modes of library use mentioned by the teachers indicate that the consultation of books is left entirely up to students or their families.

KEY POINTS

1. Whether the teaching is organized in French or in a national language, it is difficult to simultaneously work on reading comprehension and mastering the code. It seems to work to students' benefit, to differentiate between the teaching time devoted to complementary dimensions of reading and the teaching materials used in connection with the two dimensions:

- By proposing stimulating texts for the students to discover and discuss through teacher-led read-alouds and if possible in the national language and in French.
- By choosing short texts on themes already worked on in class and made up of known words to learn a phonogram or a morphogram, or to practise deciphering.

2. To develop a formal oral and written culture (a culture of oral and written genres) and to encourage silent reading, it would be advisable to establish a corpus of texts. These texts should be adapted to students' knowledge, but should also be stimulating for them, in order to foster an interest in reading. Such texts would not only be used for silent reading, but would provide materials for teacher read-alouds.

3. Means must be found to: offset the shortage of textbooks and lack of libraries and, create conditions whereby students can build a memory of texts worked on in class and, thereby contribute to the construction of a written culture. A class notebook, or better still, a notebook per student, that gathers together previously read texts, could be an affordable solution in countries with limited financial means. Such an instrument could hold texts written both in French and in national languages.

4. Posters and various texts distributed to educate children about environmental sustainability or health could serve as additional resources for reading instruction. These writings, which are available in French (and perhaps also in national languages, to be checked), constitute reading materials that can be used for the purpose of instruction.

5. The practice of child-to-adult dictation to produce various texts familiar to students would favour (re)reading and contact with texts from Grade 1.

6. Other techniques such as copying from memory or situating the writing exercise in relation to a familiar reference text would accelerate the comprehension of the alphabetic principle and develop phonographic knowledge.

KEY POINTS

7. The practice of ensuring that students properly comprehend the concepts used to describe the various parts of language should be widely adopted. For some time now, research has emphasized the positive impact that cognitive clarity has on learning. Poor understanding of the concepts of sound, phoneme, syllable, word, sentence and text impedes students' comprehension of the task and the learning content.

8. The concepts of 'sound', letter and texts seem to still be opaque. In the interest of cognitive clarity, they should be properly defined. These concepts are important regardless of the language of instruction.

9. Vocabulary is an important component of teaching a second language. Preparing the content of the reading lesson in the national language and then in French would foster reading comprehension.

10. The teacher and student read-alouds would benefit from being better observed and defined. Reading aloud involves at least four functions:

- The teacher read-aloud mediate texts that students cannot discover on their own, with the purpose of building a written culture.
- The student read-aloud is a way to assess deciphering skills; the words students struggle with reveal syllable combinations they have not mastered and words they don't understand. The read-aloud also lets the teacher observe whether or not students are able to correct themselves. The lessons can be adjusted on the basis of such observations.
- Reading aloud is a way of working on reading fluency.
- The use of read-alouds in class to communicate a text to listeners represents a way of working on the comprehension and interpretation of a text.

11. Teachers use textbooks as working tools in the classroom; this is also true for the guides that go with them. It would be beneficial to distribute them at the same time as the textbooks.

12. The progression, concerning the mastery of the code and language on the one hand, and textual knowledge on the other, is more discontinuous than continuous. These progressions could be conceived differently, through successive phases of repetition and development.

13. Developing an awareness of the sounds of words in national languages and French, and introducing exercises that work on the phonological and phonemic analysis of words, would complement what is essentially a graphophonological approach.

MARDI

MERCREDI

CONCLUDING REMARKS

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The concluding remarks presented below highlight key points to be taken into account for curricular alignment and the progression of teaching content over the first three years of compulsory education in Burkina Faso, Niger and Senegal. These findings should not be considered as definitive statements. They have been drawn up to prompt discussions that enable key stakeholders in the three countries' education system, to define future priorities.

1. LEARNING TO READ MEANS ENTERING INTO A NEW WAY OF THINKING

Reading is a complex activity involving the coordination of several components:

- Awareness of the purpose of reading and the formulation of a reading project.
- General knowledge (of the world, texts and languages-in other words, of a written culture).
- Specific knowledge (of text genres, sentences, words and infralexical units such as phonemes, graphemes, syllables and so on).

Learning to read therefore means constructing these components in a process that extends over several years. It takes even longer in a second language, as is the case in the sub-Saharan countries concerned in this study. These reading components must be brought to interact dynamically and weave together in the activity of constructing the meaning of a text.

There are various components to *written culture* that have to be assimilated: an awareness of the purpose of reading, the formulation of a reading project, and general knowledge about the world. *Specific knowledge* of the text genre (sentences, words and infralexical units) is involved in constructing the meaning of a text. None of these components can be totally absent from the reading activity; at the same time, none of them needs to be fully mastered to understand a text. This means, for example, that understanding an unknown word requires some mastery of deciphering. However, conversely, the ability to decode every unit in a word is not sufficient to understand it. In addition, the process of understanding a word is itself governed by, and indeed cannot succeed without, the reader's desire to construct meaning from the text he or she is looking at.

There are three consequences that arise due to the above:

- **First:** Emerging readers must know, even partially, and mobilize, the same components as experienced readers. The difference lies in their conception and experience of the activity of reading as well as their knowledge of writing.
- **Second:** students should work on all components necessary to reading, from the first days of school, in a progressive manner. This does not mean that they should work on everything in the same lesson, rather these components must all be taken into account over succeeding lessons. Furthermore, a discourse should be developed to explain the connection between various reading components.
- **Third:** the ability to construct meaning mobilizes a high level of attention and various forms of knowledge. Knowledge of language, in particular, plays a crucial role. When initial reading instruction is done in a second language, two important learning processes must take place together: the process of learning to speak and understand a new language, and that of learning to read in a language that is barely mastered orally and little or very rarely used in everyday life. This strong constraint requires considerable effort on the part of learners, as well as from teachers, who are constructing and negotiating student learning in a language they themselves may practice less.

1- Learning to read from the *start of schooling,* means dynamically connecting heterogeneous and multidi-mensional components in order to construct meaning. These components encompass the conception of the activity, the reader's project, and both general and specific knowledge.

2- Comprehension of spoken language and language-related knowledge act as key stepping stones in the construction of these components and knowledge. The hampering effect of initiating reading instruction in a second language can be offset by systematic work on oral communication.

3- Knowledge of a variety of texts, both orally and in writing, favours the dynamic interaction of reading components. Materials that foster such knowledge must be promoted.

2. ADAPTING A NEW WAY OF THINKING, IN A MULTILINGUAL CONTEXT

In the rich multilingual context of sub-Saharan Africa, teaching and learning to read generally takes place under the twin influence of national languages and French. It is worth pointing out that the teaching models, some of which are bilingual, are varied (see Chapter 2) and it is up to each country to decide how it takes contextual elements into account and what bilingual model it uses as a reference.

Oral comprehension is a good gauge of reading ability. However, when students learn to read in a second language – French – oral comprehension no longer serves as a basis for initiation into written language. Means must be developed, in national languages and in French, to facilitate the oral comprehension of texts. Depending on the resources available in national languages, this may require creating new language forms, varied text genres with specific vocabulary, and sometimes a technical vocabulary. In other words, it may entail reinforcing the 'scripted' dimension of the national language by developing it in terms of writing.

The differences between the spoken national languages and French can reinforce constraints and difficulties: the former has a transparent spelling system whereas French has one of the opaquest. Switching from one system to another makes the process even more complex.

Nonetheless, students' language skills are an asset that teaching can build on. In sub-Saharan Africa, these abilities are characterized by a high degree of linguistic variation, depending on regional dialects. The systematic use of national languages, in teaching, would help to standardize these languages (defining terminology, developing dictionaries) and assist in developing their written language (creating corpora of texts, a glossary of teaching terms, etc.). There is a need for a broad range of knowledge content, which is still not available today. The standardization of the written form of some national languages, reflects the considerable efforts undertaken by the countries involved in this process. This long-term project is only possible provided there is a broad consensus on the part of policy-makers, educational professionals and the general population.

A second point concerns students' language skills in national languages (it also applies to students learning French as their primary language of instruction). They master a language constructed from their real-world experience, that of their families and their contact with different media in national languages (television,

newspapers, advertisements, radio, mobile phones, etc.). Nonetheless, early reading instruction involves a different relationship to language, even when students learn to read in their mother tongue. It is at school that this relationship with language is constructed. Therefore, introduction to reading can be supported by developing and enriching language skills in national languages, even implicitly, including knowledge of grammar, vocabulary and oral and written text genres.

1- In sub-Saharan countries, the teaching and learning of reading takes place in a multilingual context. To improve educational achievement, it seems preferable to move towards bilingual instruction. It is worth pointing out that various models of bilingualism exist (see Chapter 2) and, it is up to each country to decide how it takes contextual factors into account and what bilingual model it adheres to. The form this instruction will take remains to be defined on a country by country basis.

2- As the secondary and tertiary tiers of the education system are oriented towards the official language, French, it is essential for students to learn this language.

3- In bilingual classes, instruction in French must be combined with instruction in national languages in such a way that students both learn French and master writing.

4- The oral comprehension of texts in national languages must be developed. The lexical and syntactic knowledge available in national languages must be stabilized and broadened. These elements constitute resources that can be used to establish links with the learning of French and the comprehension of texts in French. Priority should be given to developing a systematic reflexive approach in national languages in order to facilitate the learning of French. It would be useful to develop resources for this purpose.

5- In the case of monolingual French instruction, there is a need to develop teaching methods that are not modelled on the usual methods of teaching a second language. As students are constantly immersed in a French-language environment at school, French being the language of instruction, it is important to take advantage of this teaching, all the while remaining aware of the limits that exist in terms of the comprehension of content and difficulties in reading comprehension.

6- It is essential to develop teaching structures *before* initiation into writing (before Grade 1). These must introduce children to the French language through different modes of communication (games, storytelling, brief explanations, etc.).

7- The context of the class can function as a communication situation for learning French.

8- The use of vehicular national languages in French teaching situations should be the rule, whenever possible.

As already emphasized above, learning to read is a complex activity whose components are the same in all languages, even if they manifest themselves differently. Children develop an *awareness of the purpose of reading* through the contact and experiences they have with oral language, writing and different textual media. *Knowledge about the world, about genres of oral and written texts, and languages* plays an important role in understanding the activity of

reading, in grasping the meaning of texts encountered in everyday situations and in formal lessons, and in the ability to establish links between the texts that have been heard or read (intertextuality). This knowledge is what enables the student to formulate a reading project and to anticipate the content evoked in texts and writings.

Two perspectives should be kept in mind in order to create a context that is more conducive to learning to read:

1- It is possible to identify and then model existing formal oral genres in national languages. More formal knowledge of the texts produced in national languages – the languages spoken by students – constitutes a reference to broaden and standardize the students' language skills. This knowledge serves both as a springboard and an interface for learning reading and writing in national languages and French.

2- Texts in French and national languages that are used in various social fields (health education, environmental sustainability education, professional technical training, literacy materials, etc.) could be used as media for reading instruction. This corpus of texts could help facilitate comparisons between languages and more formal learning (vocabulary, syntax and knowledge of textual units).

The third aspect concerns *specific knowledge*. This language- and text-related knowledge can be divided into two subgroups: 1) communicative and textual components; and 2) lexical and infralexical components.

Communicative and textual knowledge primarily concerns the organization of content and standard text plans, which vary according to text types. This knowledge is involved in the prediction of meaning and the construction of an intention. The recognition of text plans, for example those of narrative texts, favours the formulation of hypotheses and therefore the process of verifying and regulating reading comprehension. Lexical and syntactic knowledge is closely related to the communicative intention of the texts and the genres to which it belongs. For example, the lexical precision of the terms used in injunctive texts (such as recipes, assembly instructions or game rules) enables an action to be performed efficiently. Textual knowledge is developed through the teaching and learning of oral expression and in the relationship children and students construct with language.

Lexical and infralexical components are largely mobilized to decode words. In teaching a language such as French, which is practised very little by students, one must not lose sight of the fact that words must be understood, that is to say, they must have already been encountered by students.

Knowledge of infralexical units (syllables, phonemes, graphemes, morphemes) depends on the spoken language and on languages learned at school. This encompasses *phonological knowledge* (sounds and rhythm of the language, knowledge of oral and written syllables), *phonemic knowledge* (distinctive sound units with no meaning, altering the meaning of words or the phonemes of a language), *graphemic knowledge* (how the phonemes in a given language are written) and knowledge of morphemes, which are the smallest units of meaning of the language (e.g. gender markers, numbers, verb endings, affixes, etc.). This infralexical knowledge is partially constructed in the process of learning to speak. Depending on the languages spoken and taught, these units manifest themselves differently. They intervene early in the conceptions of language constructed by children. This existing knowledge, developed while learning to speak, provides a basis upon which instruction can build.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

1- The current thinking on reading is that one cannot introduce writing without also addressing oral language; that the ability to speak and oral comprehension act as the basis for early reading instruction; that learning to read and learning to write must go hand in hand; that textual knowledge cannot be neglected in favour of deciphering; that the phonological code cannot be neglected in favour of meaning, or meaning in favour of the phonological code; that morphological knowledge cannot be set aside in favour of phonological knowledge (and this is especially true in a multilingual context). Each component and set of components is important, they all contribute to the activity of reading.

2- In bilingual education, reading instruction has everything to gain if these various dimensions of reading-writing can be appropriated both in national languages and in the second language.

3. ARRANGE CLASSROOMS SO AS TO FACILITATE THE LEARNING OF READING: DISPLAY WRITING PROMINENTLY AND MAKE ITS USES VISIBLE

School plays a crucial role in providing students with a writing environment. It is possible to implement simple methods to reinforce the presence of writing. These methods must offer the flexibility of the blackboard and slates and, at the same time build a memory of lesson content and texts. The use of personal and collective materials should be considered.

1- The tools that best enhance classroom work are the blackboards, which are used to display drawings, texts and writings that can be read by a large class size; the large slates, which facilitate group work; materials to display and memorize what has been learned; notebooks containing all the texts produced by the class or other classes, thus constituting a valuable resource that can be used to reread texts students have already worked on, or to search for textual components, vocabulary, spellings, etc.

2- These tools can be used not only to display writings and texts, but also definitions or student explanations and justifications. Such tools help build a more conscious relationship to language, writing and texts.

3- Individual tools such as slates are useful for exercises, in which mistakes are considered as part of the learning process; books, even in small quantities, to be consulted and discovered, along with textbooks or notebooks of texts, are ways of demonstrating the durability of writing. There is potential to build a more individual relationship to writing through the use of these materials.

4. WORK TOWARDS CURRICULAR ALIGNMENT. PLAN AND THINK PROGRESSION

Key criteria for successfully achieving the objectives of education systems include: curricular alignment (to be as cohesive as possible), syllabi, programmes, methodologies, textbooks and teacher training. The document review shows that curricular alignment varies from country to country. The objectives and syllabi as well as the teaching materials, and initial training of teachers need to be upgraded. They do not always match the new expectations and constraints of each country.

Continuing education is one of the keys to curricular alignment and drives innovation, yet it only occurs sporadically. Curricular alignment needs to be shaped by innovation and the dynamic it generates, which is indispensable to education systems, as well as by a search for an overall cohesiveness. The responsibility for steering this process falls to the main decision-makers and experts of education systems.

From a didactic perspective, curricular alignment can also be viewed in terms of the progression of educational content and how this content is articulated from one grade to the next. Didactic progression is defined as a formal planning of content according to a specific temporal order. It is based on two pillars: (1) the conditions under which the reading instruction takes place; and (2) knowledge of the learners` abilities. The progression may be more or less selective and more or less favourable to the success of all students. Particular attention must be given to the continuities and shifts necessary to introduce new teaching content. These shifts place students in less familiar or unfamiliar situations that require them to mobilize their knowledge and approach tasks in new ways.

Teaching practices are conceived in line with curricular alignment and the didactic progression of teaching content. Classroom activity is based on curricular requirements, reinterpreted and adapted to the teaching conditions. This interpretation leads to a progression, guided by the teacher, that translates the teaching content into classroom practice. The implementation of the curricular requirements will necessarily differ from the logic of the curriculum. Indeed, every teacher must take into account the specific context in which he or she teaches (available resource, local culture, etc.) and a given group of students. Depending on their experience, teachers will approach their lessons in different ways.

Furthermore, the tradition of teaching endows practitioners with a professional culture, consisting of know-how acquired through training, but also through experience and through peer socialization. Professional culture is forged through regular contact with other teachers whose working methods are influenced by multiple traditions, integrating older practices with new practices.

The scope of this study was limited to the analysis of reading instruction over the first three grades of compulsory education. It is important to bear in mind that it merely maps out the first phase in this curricular alignment.

1- Sustainably improving the teaching and learning of French and reading requires a *concerted, cohesive and long-term commitment* in favour of a *curricular alignment of educational content and training.*

2- With this goal in mind, the objectives and orientations of syllabi, methods and proposals for educational materials should be adjusted for each phase, and from one phase to the next in elementary or primary school.

3- The efforts of those responsible for teacher training, especially the decision-makers and officials, should focus on aligning the teaching of various academic disciplines, including languages and reading.

4- The teaching content, such as it takes form in the various materials available to teachers over the first three grades of elementary school, must be organized with a view to *didactic progression*. This seems essential in order to be able to monitor continuities and discontinuities that may cause obstacles to teaching and learning, as well as to provide openings for necessary modifications. Thinking in terms of progression through phases of repetition and follow-up, contributes to curricular alignment.

5- Initial teacher training plays a central role in the curricular alignment of reading instruction. It must target the development and expansion of didactic knowledge, especially knowledge relating to teaching oral skills, the initiation into written culture, reading and the comprehension and production of oral and written texts.

6- There seems to be a clear need to train a body of experts specialized in the components of teaching French and reading in a multilingual context. It would be useful to carry out a survey of existing resources.

5. IMPROVE THE TOOLS AVAILABLE TO TEACHERS

Syllabi and teaching materials are two of the key components of curricular alignment, the third being initial and continuing teacher training. Examination of the goals and objectives of language instruction in the syllabi and teaching materials suggests two specific disciplinary configurations.

In Grade 1 and Grade 2, it is mainly the basic units of *sentence* and *word,* as well as those of *syllable* and letter, that structure the teaching. Students sometimes do exercises on word recognition and sentence comprehension with the aim of working on the code and learning to decipher. Deciphering, word comprehension and copying activities focus on infralexical units. The communicative dimension of language receives little attention. In Grade 3, the focus of teaching shifts to reading texts and to the sub-disciplines of French (spelling, conjugation, grammar and vocabulary). The texts in the textbook serve as a starting point for pronunciation activities or formal analyses. Most of the questions asked about the texts are literal; the answers can be found in the text and students are not asked to justify their answers. When students are asked to appraise the texts or give an opinion it mainly concerns questions of behaviour and moral edification.

While the students are considered to be multilingual, French is effectively taught as a second language. The importance attributed to the content of the texts in French should compensate for the fact that very few students speak French when they start school. The students' language skills do not serve as a springboard for learning languages (whether national or French). These resources could be mobilized but are left untapped.

1- The gap in the curricular configuration, and the progression of reading instruction between the first two grades and the third grade in compulsory schooling, represents a real obstacle for early reading instruction. The educational materials are aligned in accordance with this curricular configuration and reflect this gap. Too little time is spent on mastering the components of reading. Reading comprehension is not favoured by such a division of educational content.

2- In the syllabi and teaching materials, the students' multilingual abilities, and the status of French as a second language, should be better taken into account. The documents sometimes refer to French being a second language. Some advocate for bilingual education. Whether systematic bilingual instruction is advocated or instruction through the national language, to facilitate comprehension by the students, in a multilingual context, the most important thing is to set a clear approach, so as to mobilize the students' abilities and encourage links and comparisons between languages. Language skills and the relationship between speech and writing in the various languages need to be clearly defined and transposed into teaching practices.

3- Recently, there has been a noticeable shift, prioritizing reading comprehension over the production of texts. This calls for further discussion. A balance needs to be found between comprehension and the production of texts, between deciphering and copying words or sentences, as reading is constructed in interaction with writing and vice versa.

4- It would be beneficial to introduce activities promoting emergent writing, and the production of texts from when students first start lessons on written communication. Such activities facilitate the initiation into writing. The teaching materials do not propose activities that complement copying or sentence writing exercises. Intelligent copying, which consists of analysing the word, memorizing it, and writing it from memory, could also be taught.

5- To facilitate the initiation into writing and the discovery of texts, preparatory activities are important. Whether in a national language or in French, discussing the subject matter of a text before reading it, and defining what motivates the search for meaning, would support the students' efforts to construct meaning.

6- It is difficult to determine whether or not oral instruction is included in the bilingual instruction materials. To prepare students for the practice and study of language in school, it would be useful to work on oral communication in the national language. Furthermore, learning to produce genres of formal texts in the national language would help the students learn to read in, both the national language and in French. Repertoires of oral texts could be compiled and could be used as a common reference when learning to read in French. This could encourage reflection on texts and languages.

7- To enhance reading instruction in a second language and to develop a written culture, it would seem important to differentiate the texts used to teach reading. Three sets of texts corresponding to different functions should be proposed: (1) easily understandable short texts used to learn how to decipher and read fluently; (2) varied text genres, to listen to, read, understand or work on with a view to reading/reciting them in front of others. The content of these more demanding texts should undergo a preparation in the national language or be accompanied by texts in national languages; (3) Enhancement texts that contribute to the construction of

various kinds of knowledge offer opportunities for silent reading in connection with a reading project and provide additional references for text models.

8- It is assumed that a good reader can read different kinds of texts. This is based on the reader's ability to diversify reading strategies, which is in turn supported by the reader's knowledge of the texts. Research on the didactics of reading does not support the hypothesis of students having a cross cutting competency. Developing the ability to diversify depends on access to corpora of texts in national languages, and the second language.

9- It would be desirable to promote inferential and critical reading, supported by a variety text types. Students' ability to comprehend and interpret texts is reinforced if they are required to justify or explain their points of view, so as to share it with their peers and the teacher.

10- The purpose and place of reading aloud seem to be in contradiction with that of silent reading. Placing the students in reading situations infers that they are being presented with texts whose meaning they discover by themselves. Although the purpose of the reading exercise is explained by the teacher, this is a complex situation in which to place students who do not know French well. A read-aloud by the teacher cannot take the place of silent reading. There is need to work with shorter, simpler texts conducive to independent reading, by students during early reading instruction. The respective functions of reading aloud and silent reading need to be properly defined and their objectives clarified through appropriate teaching methods. Indeed, they complement rather than contradict each other.

11- The syllabi and materials mainly propose an approach that is both analytical (word segmentation or segmenting from the sentence) and synthetic (blending exercises starting from letters, or from syllables to words). It is essentially graphophonemic. This approach would benefit from being broadened to include phonological analysis and work on phonological awareness through phoneme identification, deletion, replacement and removal tasks. Such tasks may also be applied to national languages, and give rise to comparisons favouring a reflexive approach to languages.

12- Some of the teaching materials define the concepts of 'sound', word, sentence, text, etc. This attention to cognitive clarity is commendable and should be generalized. For emergent readers, these are new and abstract concepts that cause misunderstanding; students must be given the means to understand and use them correctly.

13- In the teaching materials, what is meant by 'sound' or 'letters' is often vague and fluctuating. These terms should be clarified to specify whether they refer to a phoneme, a syllable or a sequence of letters denoting different linguistic units (affixes, endings or other units).

14- Knowledge of the alphabet, the names of letters and the most common phonemes that correspond to them, are not concepts that are routinely recommended in the syllabi and materials. This type of knowledge can act as a predictor of reading ability and should be added to the curricular requirements.

Given the complexity of learning to read in a multilingual context, the objectives that have been set are ambitious. They should be reconsidered so as to allow students more time to learn how to read.

6. BE FAMILIAR WITH PRACTICES IN ORDER TO ADJUST PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

It is necessary to sound a note of caution when interpreting the findings of this study as these findings are based on the filmed reading lessons alone. What preceded and followed the lessons fell beyond the scope of the analysis and could only be elaborated on through the interviews. There are many components to reading instruction and only some of these components could be observed. These factors should be taken into account when reading the points listed below.

It is important to note that the teachers whose reading lessons were observed are highly experienced teachers who have been working in education for many years. They are all experts in using the blackboard (or blackboards) to transcribe the lessons done in class, sometimes adding illustrations. They often alternate lessons between reading activities and writing tasks on slates. Working with the slate makes students more visually aware of how letters function as graphic units that can be arranged in sequences. Bigger slates can sometimes serve as a complementary medium for group work. They offer a way to diversify activities by encouraging students to interact with one another.

Concerning multilingualism, there appear to be few references to national languages when reading instruction concerns French or, conversely, few references to French when the instruction is conducted in a national language. From what was observed in the classroom, there is no systematized practice of comparing languages, even in bilingual classes (such methods exist, according to the teachers, even if one has the impression that the lessons are conducted in parallel). It should be pointed out, however, that in some of the classes, there were references to other languages. For example, to a story told by a grandfather or a student telling a story in a national language. It would be beneficial to generalize practices of this kind.

In lessons where French is taught as a second language, the national language is only used occasionally, to clarify misunderstandings; teachers go so far as to speak of it as a *stopgap* solution to ensure that a word or task is understood. It would therefore seem that the national language is not considered as a resource in the classroom. This negative view of the national language creates barriers to learning.

Yet, in some bilingual classes, the range of activities seem more substantial. For example, during the interviews, the teachers spoke of situations in which students draw on metalinguistic skills to differentiate between words in national languages used in the home and at school. Their relationship to language seems to be more reflexive.

Reading instruction is subject to *variations* from country to country, but there are also many *similarities*. The *variations* concern the degree of bilingual instruction and the presence or virtual absence of texts in the classroom. Reading instruction contributes, to varying degrees, of familiarizing students with texts. This factor depends on the syllabi and teaching materials used by the teachers. All the teachers refer to the materials to which they have access. In the syllabi, where the variety of text types is an integral part of the official requirements, there is an evident diversity in the texts students are asked to read. This diversity broadens students' written culture.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The *similarities* concern progression, the focus on deciphering and learning the code, the presence of texts from Grade 3 and the little time devoted to comprehension work.

In all three countries, there is a noticeable difference in the content taught between the first two years and the third year of compulsory schooling: put simply, there is a shift of focus in the teaching that constructs a different relationship to language; the students are considered capable of speaking and understanding French, and to be proficient in deciphering. However, learning to read in a second language requires more time. The teachers' expectations, influenced by the curricular requirements, are overly ambitious, which results in some students failing to learn to read.

During the first two grades, the instruction prioritizes decoding. A highly systematic approach is used, sometimes working from words but usually through the segmentation of a key sentence that students are assumed to understand; the sentence is broken down into words, then words into syllables and syllables into 'sounds'. Students may take part in auditory and visual discrimination activities, or blending tasks building from sound to syllable (sometimes with syllabic blending tasks, used more systematically in one country), and from syllable to word. Sentences, words and sounds are the primary units of reading instruction. Auditory and visual discrimination are the first steps towards a more detailed and systematic analysis of phonemes. This activity should be supplemented by additional exercises to develop phonological analysis, which implies a broader knowledge of phonemes and graphemes. Indeed, it must be pointed out that the concept of 'sound' is vague, both in how it is constructed in classroom interactions and in terms of how it is presented in the curricula.

Students work very systematically on fluent reading, which takes up a relatively large share of lessons. In countries where texts rarely feature, the teachers and good students read a sentence several times so that, through repetition, it is internalized; in countries where texts feature prominently, fluent reading is developed from the text, according to the same principle of repetition.

Does fluent reading turn into expressive reading that requires better comprehension? The question remains open. Across all the lessons observed, it seems that little emphasis is put on reading comprehension. Literal comprehension questions are sometimes asked. On rare occasions one finds inferential questions, or questions asking students to make moral judgments concerning the behaviour of such and such a character. Even in Grade 3, where the text is used as a learning tool, work on comprehension remains negligible. One rarely sees examples of exercises in which students collectively work on written comprehension.

In Grade 3, the text is approached from a formal and analytical point of view that draws on textual language skills to varying degrees. The target units are unfamiliar words and grammatical concepts, which as a rule are analysed independently of the texts' communicative intention.

1- Comprehension activities should be prioritized in classroom practices. Those currently proposed do little to prepare the development of reading skills that go beyond decoding or enable students to understand or interpret a text. A renewed focus on reading comprehension, on the comprehension and production of formal oral and written genres in national languages and in French, would represent a major step towards achieving high-level reading skills that are sufficiently diversified. This would help students to successfully progress through school, as well as to read and produce texts encountered in the various activities of professional and civic life.

2- Activities such as telling stories, or using them for teacher read-alouds, as well as reading aloud non-fiction texts or other text genres, in national languages and in French, should be prioritized. These activities exist, but they should be generalized because they promote lexical and syntactic knowledge as well as fostering a written culture. Lexical knowledge and oral communication skills are good predictors of reading comprehension.

3- Systematic comprehension exercises should feature much more frequently in the classroom, based on texts that have been heard or spoken. Discussions, comments and explanations on comprehension and interpretation should be encouraged.

4- Special attention should be given to students' lexical knowledge, in relation to the comprehension and production of texts in national languages and French. Regular use should be made of read-alouds by the teacher, prepared by discussions on the topics covered in the text and followed by discussions to facilitate comprehension.

5- Comprehension of texts is a key component in reading instruction, for it is what enables students to understand the purpose of the lessons they do in class, and the texts they are asked to read. However, it is difficult to work simultaneously on comprehension and mastering the code. Therefore, it would seem most beneficial to separate these complementary dimensions of reading during lessons, and to distinguish between the teaching materials used in connection to them. This would involve:
- Proposing stimulating texts for students to discover and discuss through teacher read-alouds, if possible in a national language and French.
- Choosing short texts on themes already developed, and composed of familiar words, to have students learn a phonogram or morphogram or do a deciphering exercise.

6- The ultimate goal of reading instruction is for students to become independent readers. They must have access to collections of texts in French and national languages. To offset the shortage of textbooks and the lack of libraries, to create the conditions whereby students can build a memory of the texts worked on in class, and thereby contribute to the construction of a written culture, means must be found. A class notebook, or better still, a notebook per student, that contains previously read texts, could be an affordable solution in countries with limited financial means. Posters and various texts distributed to educate children about environmental sustainability or health could serve as additional resources. These writings, which are available in French and perhaps also in national languages, constitute reading materials that can be used for the purpose of instruction.

7- Focusing on the code in the first two years of primary school is likely to make it difficult for students to perceive the purpose of reading, its nature and what it represents in terms of learning. It would be advisable to expose students to elements of written culture from when they first enter school, by means of books, collections of stories and various texts. Some of which would be read by the teacher, in French as well as in national languages, so as to facilitate their comprehension by students. What matters here is not the quantity, but the quality of the selected texts (simple and within students' abilities) and the discussions about them.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

8- Developing interactions between reading and writing helps students understand the alphabetic principle from the early stages of learning to read. Introducing the practice of child-to-adult dictation, as a way of producing various texts familiar to students would favour (re)reading and contact with texts from Grade 1. It seems essential to devote more time to writing in its different forms: copying, making up short sentences, the exchange of words between students, etc.

9- The practice of ensuring that students properly comprehend the concepts used to describe the various parts of language should be widely adopted. Research has emphasized the positive impact of cognitive clarity on learning.

10- The concept of 'sound' seems to still be opaque. In the interests of cognitive clarity, it should be properly defined.

11- Developing an awareness of the sounds of words in national languages and French, and introducing exercises that work on the phonological and phonemic analysis of words, would complement what is essentially a graphophonological approach.

12- Knowledge of the alphabet (the names of letters and the 'sounds' to which they most frequently correspond) is a good predictor of reading ability. This knowledge should be developed from the start of schooling. When accompanied by writing tasks, it fosters comprehension of the alphabetic principle.

13- A high number of phonemes and letter sequences takes up most of the teaching in the first two grades of compulsory schooling. It would be beneficial to reduce and reorganize the time devoted to this aspect. This would free time to work on other components of reading.

14- The morphological units of language are virtually absent from the first or even the second grade. The comprehension of these units plays an important role in the comprehension of sentences and texts, however, they do not function in the same way in French and in national languages. This aspect deserves closer attention in order to develop students' reflexive skills.

15- Teacher read-alouds should be practiced regularly. This activity has at least three functions:

- The teacher read-aloud, mediate texts that students cannot discover on their own, with the purpose of building a written culture.
- The student read-aloud is a way to assess deciphering skills; the words students struggle with reveal syllable combinations not yet mastered, and the words they don't understand. The read-aloud also lets the teacher observe whether or not students are able to correct themselves. The lessons can be adjusted on the basis of such observations. Finally, reading aloud is a way of working on reading fluency.
- The use of read-alouds in class, to communicate a text to listeners, represents a way of working on the comprehension and interpretation of a text.

16- The textbooks are the teachers' working tools, but the same is true for the guides that go with them. The guides are designed with the teachers in mind. It would be beneficial to distribute them at the same time as the textbooks.

17- Students should be asked more systematically to justify their answers and interpretations, or to explain specific language points.

18- The way a reading lesson starts and ends plays an important role: teachers should more frequently remind students of concepts encountered in previous lessons and do summaries of the concepts used during lessons.

19- The didactic progression in terms of mastery of the code, language and textual knowledge could be planned out on the basis of successive phases of repetition and follow-up.

7. NEED FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND OBSERVATIONS

To conclude, the authors of the study would like to add two important comments:

The key points listed in relation to teacher training, specifically in relation to the teaching of French and reading, remain very general. It was not possible to precisely define the content of the training. It would be highly desirable to conduct further studies on this topic.

As stated in a number of recommendations, the difficulties and obstacles mentioned in connection with the learning of French, and learning to write in a second language, could be partially offset by systematically introducing spoken French at the preschool level. However, the literature survey did not take preschool teaching content into account. A further survey focusing on this level of the school system would certainly provide additional information and would give rise to proposals that could usefully contribute to early reading instruction.

Concluding remarks

BURKINA FASO

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Type	Language	Material
Programme	Arabic	Syllabus
Textbook	Arabic	Student textbook
Guide	Arabic	Teaching Arabic
Guide	Arabic	Islamic studies in Grade 1
Guide	French	Guide to Teaching French as a Second Language
Programme	Fulfulde	Syllabus
Textbook	Fulfulde	Student's Language Manual
Textbook	Fulfulde	Mathematics Textbook in Fulfulde in Grade 1
Guide	Fulfulde	Guide to Teaching Fulfulde in Grade 1
Guide	Fulfulde	Guide to Teaching Mathematics in Fulfulde in Grade 1
Guide	Fulfulde	Guide to Teaching Sciences, Technology and Environmental studies in Fulfulde in Grade 1
Guide	Fulfulde	Guide to Teaching Civic Education, Art, Culture and Music in Fulfulde in Grade 1
Guide	Fulfulde	Guide to Teaching Health Education, Physical Education and Sports in Fulfulde in Grade 1
Programme	Hausa	Syllabus
Textbook	Hausa	Grade 1 Hausa Textbook
Textbook	Hausa	Mathematics Textbook in Hausa in Grade 1
Guide	Hausa	Guide to Teaching Hausa in Grade 1
Guide	Hausa	Guide to Teaching Mathematics in Hausa in Grade 1
Guide	Hausa	Guide to Teaching Sciences, Technology and Environmental studies in Hausa in Grade 1
Guide	Hausa	Guide to Teaching Civic Education, Art, Culture and Music in Hausa in Grade 1
Guide	Hausa	Guide to Teaching Health Education, Physical Education and Sports in Hausa in Grade 1
Programme	Kanuri	Syllabus
Guide	Kanuri	Guide to Teaching Kanuri in Grade 1

Type	Language	Material
Guide	Kanuri	Guide to Teaching Mathematics in Kanuri in Grade 1
Guide	Kanuri	Guide to Teaching Sciences, Technology and Environmental studies in Kanuri in Grade 1
Guide	Kanuri	Guide to Teaching Civic Education, Art, Culture and Music in Kanuri in Grade 1
Guide	Kanuri	Guide to Teaching Health Education, Physical Education and Sports in Kanuri in Grade 1
Programme	Tamajaq	Syllabus
Textbook	Tamajaq	Grade 1 Tamajaq Textbook
Textbook	Tamajaq	Mathematics Textbook in Tamajaq in Grade 1
Textbook	Tamajaq	Grade 1 Tamajaq Textbook
Textbook	Tamajaq	Mathematics Textbook in Tamajaq in Grade 1
Guide	Tamajaq	Guide to Teaching Tamajaq in Grade 1
Guide	Tamajaq	Guide to Teaching Mathematics in Tamajaq in Grade 1
Guide	Tamajaq	Guide to Teaching Sciences, Technology and Environmental studies in Tamajaq in Grade 1
Guide	Tamajaq	Guide to Teaching Civic Education, Art, Culture and Music in Tamajaq in Grade 1
Guide	Tamajaq	Guide to Teaching Health Education, Physical Education and Sports in Tamajaq in Grade 1
Programme	Zarma	Syllabus
Textbook	Zarma	Grade 1 Zarma Textbook
Textbook	Zarma	Mathematics Textbook in Zarma in Grade 1
Guide	Zarma	Guide to Teaching Zarma in Grade 1
Guide	Zarma	Guide to Teaching Mathematics in Zarma in Grade 1
Guide	Zarma	Guide to Teaching Sciences, Technology and Environmental studies in Zarma in Grade 1
Guide	Zarma	Guide to Teaching Civic Education, Art, Culture and Music in Zarma in Grade 1
Guide	Zarma	Guide to Teaching Health Education, Physical Education and Sports in Zarma in Grade 1

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