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AN INVESTIGATION OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDENTS' CONCEPTUALISATIONS OF LITERARY READING

ABSTRACT

This study investigates how first-year post-secondary students conceptualise and judge their strategic behaviour in relation to reading foreign language literary texts. The questionnaire used to collect data is structured around four important metacognitive aspects of reading: what readers believe they are able to do (Confidence), how readers conceive efficient reading in a foreign language (Effectiveness) and what readers believe makes reading difficult (Difficulty), as well as how readers believe they are able to overcome reading difficulties (Repair). In addition to providing information on conceptualisations of key areas of reading, a contrastive investigation of self-assessed proficient readers and self-assessed less proficient readers is carried out in order to elicit possible differences between the two groups.

The results obtained show that the large majority of the surveyed students are able to envision reading as a cohesive and constructive activity. Most of them report they are able to incorporate bottom-up and top-down strategic behaviour in their conceptions of foreign language reading. However, students appear to be mostly concerned with lexical difficulties which are naturally perceived by them as the major impediment to reading comprehension. As for possible conceptual differences between self-assessed proficient and less proficient students, results suggest that they are minimal. In fact, the only area where a significant discrepancy between the two groups appears is *confidence.*

INTRODUCTION

"Do first-year post-secondary language students have adequate reading skills to deal with the literary texts we want them to read?" is a question university literature instructors have had to ask themselves in recent years. It appears, increasingly, to instructors that students are finding it more and more difficult to read and interpret foreign language literary texts. Students' differing experiences, goals and expectations related to learning a foreign language have made literature instruction a strenuous pedagogical exercise in today's university language classes where students' pragmatic concerns sometimes conflict with teachers' humanistic objectives (Bouvet 1998). The gap between traditional text-centred teaching approaches and multimedia designed courses has meant that the nature of literature instruction has had to undergo significant changes in an effort to make literary studies more accessible and attractive to students. However, regardless of the type of approach used, the fact remains that reading the text is the starting point of literary practice, and the question of reading proficiency (or lack of it) cannot be ignored.

The question of proficiency in foreign language (FL) literary reading cannot simply be answered by impressionistic data gathered from the classroom. To be adequately addressed, it also requires an analysis of the components constituting FL reading, not only from a factual view point (*what students actually do when they read*), but also from a perceptual perspective (*what students believe they do and can do when they read*). To our knowledge, no study has yet focused on the perceptual characteristics of FL literary reading at university level. The chief objective of the present study, therefore, was to investigate a possible relationship between reading proficiency and the conceptualisation of literary reading, and in particular to examine students' awareness and judgment of their own strategic behaviour, the difficulties they usually encounter in the texts, and how they conceive efficient reading. To this end, we used a questionnaire to assess students' metacognitive behaviour. This questionnaire was inspired by two key empirical studies which are reviewed below.

BACKGROUND EMPIRICAL STUDIES

In the first study of its kind[1], Barnett (1988) compared real and perceived strategy use, hypothesising that "readers who perceive that they use strategies generally considered effective will understand more of what they read than those who do not think they use such strategies" (Barnett 1988:150). In order to confirm her hypothesis, Barnett developed an elaborate experiment which featured a pre-reading questionnaire measuring background knowledge, two reading tasks, and a post-reading multiple-choice questionnaire investigating reading strategies thought to be efficient by participants retrospectively.

Barnett used 278 fourth-semester students of French. Some students had been taught French with no particular stress on reading skills, and some students had been explicitly exposed to reading strategy instruction. One of the underlying objectives of the study was to investigate the effectiveness of strategy instruction.

Barnett found that comprehension increased when participants perceived that they used more effective strategies. Barnett observed a parallel development between strategy use and perception of strategy use. She was thus able to confirm her hypothesis by establishing a relationship between perception of strategy use and comprehension. However, she noted that strategy instruction had not been efficient in increasing students' awareness of reading strategies. Barnett attempted to explain her negative findings by arguing: 1° that early reading strategy training was more efficient than later adult training; and 2° that one semester, or even one year of instruction, was probably not sufficient to produce positive results. In her recommendations, Barnett rightly raised the issue of the interaction between strategy use and strategy perception, and asked the question of which one came first.

In a study focusing on metacognitive awareness of readers, Carrell (1989) also used a questionnaire to investigate "the relationship between subjects' metacognitive conceptualisation about reading in their L1 and L2 and their reading in that language" (Carrell 1989:124). However, she argued that Barnett's questionnaire "had the drawback of combining into a single item several different strategies and forcing the subjects to choose only one correct response" (Carrell 1989:123). She claimed that, in order to elicit judgments on individual strategies, subjects should not have to select strategies in a multiple-choice fashion. In order to overcome this methodological problem, Carrell designed what she termed a "metacognitive questionnaire" which used a Likert scale (1 to 5) and consisted of thirty-six statements relating to silent reading strategies to be judged by her subjects. It was divided into four sub-questionnaires which aimed to investigate the participants' confidence, their awareness of repair strategies, their perception of strategy effectiveness, and what made reading in a second language difficult.

Two large groups of subjects participated in Carrell's experiment. The first group consisted of forty-five Hispano-Americans who were studying English as a second language (L2). The second group consisted of seventy-five English native speakers who were studying Spanish as a foreign language (FL). The two groups were sub-divided into three levels of proficiency. The metacognitive questionnaire was prepared in English and in Spanish to avoid comprehension problems. Before completing the metacognitive questionnaire, the participants read two non-literary texts in their first (L1) and in their second language (L2) (between 315 and 344 words long), then completed a multiple-choice questionnaire (about each text) aimed at drawing inferences. After completion of the reading task and reading comprehension questionnaire, the participants went on to fill out the metacognitive questionnaire.

In relation to reading in L1, Carrell found a negative correlation between reading performance and local (bottom-up) strategies. This means that, although decoding types of strategies were not perceived as particularly efficient, they were not seen as a source of problems. Carrell concluded that L1 readers must have processed text automatically, since they had adequate language skills.

In relation to reading in L2, Carrell found that a distinction should be made between reading performance in a *foreign language* and reading performance in a *second language*. Perception of local strategies tended to be positively correlated with foreign language reading ability, whereas perceptions of global strategies tended to be positively correlated with second language reading ability. These results suggest that readers who perceived "global" (top-down) strategies as being effective were more likely to be efficient readers than the ones who did not.

As a result, Carrell classified readers in two groups: "global strategisers" as opposed to "local strategisers". The FL low proficiency group, for example, perceived local strategies to be effective as well as being sources of difficulty. Lower proficiency readers' bottom-up conceptualisation of reading could be attributed to "metacognitive reflexes of the language 'short circuit'" (Carrell 1989:128). Carrell's results confirmed the relationship between reading strategy use and language proficiency levels. They also demonstrated the importance of enhancing metacognitive awareness through training and reading instruction.

It must be noted that Carrell (1989) remained cautious about interpreting findings produced by her investigation. For this reason, she called for further studies of second language readers' awareness of reading strategies. It was felt here that Carrell's innovative methodology was particularly relevant to our investigation and that it could be adapted to obtain data on students' perceptions of the act of reading French literary texts for class purposes. Our meta-

cognitive study, carried out at the University of Melbourne, is presented in the following sections.

DESCRIPTION OF THE "CONCEPTUALISATIONS OF LITERARY TEXTS" STUDY

The participants

Seventy-five students enrolled in first-year post-secondary French at the University of Melbourne participated in the investigation. Before responding to the Metacognitive Questionnaire (see Appendix A), students had had seven weeks of instruction and, consequently, had read a series of short literary texts ranging from poems to novel extracts and short stories.

The timing of the experiment was an important factor affecting participants' responses. We wanted to investigate the knowledge students could have of the act of reading as early as possible in their first year, but we could not do so before they had adequate minimum exposure to the literary texts used in the classroom. For this reason, the mid-first semester point appeared to be the most appropriate time to administer the Metacognitive Questionnaire.

Students' prior experience of reading strategy instruction was also an important issue to consider. We had therefore to make sure that none of the participants had had any form of strategy training before completing the questionnaire. Although some students reported being aware that reading proficiency could be improved through special training, none of them had any previous experience of strategy instruction.

In order to investigate strategy conceptualisations across and between levels of proficiency, two groups of differing proficiency (a proficient group [SAP] and a less proficient group [SALP]) were constituted within the overall subject population (called G group). The SAP group and the SALP group were first formed on the basis of whether or not participants perceived themselves as proficient or less proficient readers. Self-perception of participants' reading proficiency had been investigated in a previous study of attitudes towards literary texts. The SAP group included seventeen participants who had "positive" to "very positive" perceptions of themselves as FL readers. The SALP group comprised fourteen participants who saw themselves as non-proficient readers. It must be noted that self-assessment and actual class performance were correlated positively in all cases.

Questionnaire design and methodological considerations

Carrell's questionnaire was adopted as the framework for the study of the metacognitive characteristics of strategic reading. However, although the general structure of Carrell's questionnaire was retained, substantial modifications were made to accommodate the specificity of reading fictional literary texts at tertiary level.

The Metacognitive Questionnaire used a 1-5 Likert scale and contained forty-two statements divided into four categories: Confidence, Repair, Effectiveness and Difficulty.

(a) Confidence

This category aimed to elicit information about the strategies participants believed they were usually able to use during silent reading. It comprised fourteen statements ranging from *coherence detection* strategies (eg perceived ability to anticipate) to *high-level inference making* strategies (eg perceived ability to read intertextually). Statement 5 is given below to illustrate the Confidence category:

> When reading silently a fictional text in French, I can always...
>
> *use my prior knowledge and experience to understand the content of the text*

(b) Repair

The statements listed under Repair related to what participants felt they could do in order to solve comprehension problems. Students had to agree or disagree with the use of eleven strategies including *technical aids* (eg rereading or using a dictionary) and *clarification* (eg guessing or paraphrasing). The main objective of this category was to elicit information on local strategic repair attitudes as opposed to global ones. For example, statement 19 read:

> When reading silently fictional texts in French, if I don't understand something,
>
> *I look up all unknown words in the dictionary*

(c) Effectiveness

This category comprised ten statements and aimed to elicit information on what participants' perceptions were of the conditions for successful literary reading in FL. In other words, we wanted participants to elucidate their conceptions of the ideal FL reader. The category concerned local and global strategies (eg "effective reading consists in recognising all words" as opposed to "effective reading consists in having an overall understanding of the text"). For example, statement 33 read:

> According to you, a successful reader of French in Textual Studies would do the following...
>
> *integrate in the text what (s)he already knows about the topic, the genre, the cultural content of the text*

(d) Difficulty

With this category we intended to find the characteristics which, according to the participants, could make reading difficult. It was not concerned with strategic behaviours as such; rather, students were asked about the nature of the reading difficulties that they thought would impede their comprehension. The Difficulty category listed seven statements related to lexicon, syntax, style, text structure, cultural knowledge, and fictional transport. The underlying rationale behind the setting up of this category was to evaluate the impact of lexical difficulty (which we believed would be the major impediment)

against other possible difficulties (eg would participants feel that vocabulary was more problematic than syntax?). Statement 37 is an example of the Difficulty category:

> My reading of French fictional texts is generally impeded by...
>
> *the difficulty of understanding the meaning of words*

The major difference between Carrell's design and the design presented here was that no text was read by the Melbourne University participants prior to completing the Metacognitive Questionnaire. However, during the design phase of the present study, the question as to whether participants should read a text as a prompt arose. The main argument in favour of reading a text before answering the questionnaire was that it would help enhance participants' awareness of reading. In our particular case, it was felt that direct exposure to reading minutes prior to completing the questionnaire might bias the outcome of the experiment, since we were mostly interested in students' perceptions of what they did when they read French literary texts in general. We were concerned that reading a single text might direct students to respond to the questionnaire in the light of their fresh experience of that particular text only. Furthermore, it was assumed that, because students filled in the questionnaire during the Textual Studies class, in the presence of their usual tutor, they were in a favourable environment and a suitable frame of mind to reflect on reading.

Research questions

The metacognitive study concerned the investigation of participants' conceptualisations of what they generally did when they read fictional literary texts in French, and what they believed they should do to read literary texts efficiently. The hypothesis was that, in the area of reading conceptualisations, there may be marked differences between students who perceived themselves as proficient readers (SAP) in French and students who did not (SALP). The study focused on three research questions:

1. "How do participants conceive their strategic involvement in three important metacognitive domains of reading FL literary texts: Confidence, Repair and Effectiveness? and, consequently, what is the nature of the factors impeding their reading (Difficulty)?"

2. "Do self-assessed proficient (SAP) and less proficient (SALP) readers differ in their conceptualisations of (a) reading difficulties and (b) what they do to attempt to overcome these difficulties?"

3. "Do self-assessed proficient (SAP) and less proficient (SALP) readers differ in their conceptualisations of the reading strategies they generally use (Confidence) and the ones they would use in ideal reading conditions (Effectiveness)?"

Results and discussion

Conceptions of strategic involvement

In order to address the first research question aimed at investigating participants' conceptions of their strategic involvement and at eliciting information about the nature of perceived reading difficulties, we calculated the percentage of responses of the entire subject population (group G) to all the statements in the Metacognitive Questionnaire. For each statement we added the percentage of strong agreements (1 on the Likert scale) to the percentage of agreements (2 on the Likert scale), and we added neutral (3 on the Likert scale) responses to disagreements (4 on the Likert scale) and strong disagreements (5 on the Likert scale). We then obtained two sets of results. The results relating to the areas of Confidence are presented in Tables 1 to 4 in Appendix B.

The results obtained in answer to the first research question revealed that, possibly because of a transfer of reading skills from L1 to FL and because of their previous experience of reading in French (even if limited), participants generally displayed awareness of their active participation in the elaboration of meaningful reading of fictional literary texts. This suggests that first-year post-secondary students are not novices but mature readers capable of reflecting on their experiences in the act of reading.

In the area of Confidence, participants reported being able to monitor their comprehension and differentiate between two reading modes: a "routine" mode (prioritising text gist and structural organisation) and a "challenging" mode (focusing on text detail such as vocabulary and grammatical structures). The majority of participants also thought that they were generally able to apprehend the particularities of fictional literary texts in terms of higher-level strategies and behaviours. A high proportion of them believed they were able to use inferencing and cohesive strategies such as: integrating their prior knowledge (74.63%), keeping the text gist in mind (72.37%), locating main points (69.01%), and relating different sections of the text (68.05%). To a lesser extent, a significant number of participants felt that they could visualise situations (60.87%), compare the author's ideology and moral values with their own (59.15%), and discern themes (54.55%). Nevertheless, the majority of participants did not express as much confidence in relation to text structure recognition (49.34%), aesthetic appreciation (38.04%) and intertextuality (38.04%). These are three domains situated at the top-end of the comprehension scale and require in-depth knowledge of the language, prolonged exposure to the text genre and formal analytical skills. It is believed here that only a few students would possess these characteristics at first-year post-secondary level.

Text anticipation, another cohesive strategy, was very negatively perceived in terms of confidence (11.27%). It may be that the statement was not always understood by the participants since 55.55% of neutral answers (3 on the Likert scale) were recorded.

In the area of Difficulty (see Table 2 in Appendix B), new and unfamiliar vocabulary was thought to constitute the main obstacle to comprehension in the context of literary reading (73.25%). In fact, vocabulary tended to override syntactical and stylistic difficulties in order of importance. These results are concurrent with most research findings in this area which suggest that

vocabulary is the readers' main concern (see particularly Carrell 1983, Carrell 1989, Hosenfeld 1984, Block 1986, Eskey 1988, Padron and Waxman 1988, McDonough 1995).

Contrary to our assumption, cultural knowledge was not perceived as an obstacle by many participants (only 19.40% agreed with the statement). Such a result can be explained by several factors:

- The texts offered in the Textual Studies class were not overly culturally-charged. Rather, they tapped into universal human experiences (eg social misfits, communication breakdown, ageing, difficult relationships, etc) which can easily be identified by young adults.

- French and Australian cultures are both Western and Christian cultures; in this respect they share many values. Thus, cultural disorientation might have been minimal.

- Most post-secondary students had experienced French life first-hand by travelling to France and living with French families (85% of the surveyed students). Consequently, it is possible that students' direct experience of France and of French cultural specificities would have helped the integration of certain cultural characteristics of the texts studied in first-year.

Another unexpected result concerned the access to fictional worlds. A high number of participants felt that they did not have difficulty entering fictional worlds depicted in the stories they had read. This suggests that, generally, first-year post-secondary students are proficient enough to distance themselves from text surface to elaborate imaginary text worlds. According to the results obtained in this study, nearly all participants (95.77%) claimed to be able to construct imaginary worlds despite reporting vocabulary problems. This indicates that sufficient knowledge of cultural content could be a prompt for the elaboration of secondary worlds and partly compensate for lexical deficiencies.

In the area of Repair (see Table 3 in Appendix B), most participants reported solving comprehension problems at word-level. This is concurrent with their concern for vocabulary reported in the area of Difficulty. The most widely reported strategy for solving difficulties at local level was dictionary consultation (90.14%). The majority of participants (81.51%) said they were aware that not all problematic words needed to be looked up systematically in the dictionary. They also reported that some unknown words could be guessed at effectively (61.09%). However, according to this study, dictionary use by far overrode guessing at words (90.14% against 61.09%). In fact, results indicated that the majority of participants could use a combination of both strategies and not exclusively one or the other.

Participants also showed awareness of movements in the text space. Backward movements (rereading), for example, were reported to be used to attend to comprehension problems (88.73%). *Skipping problematic parts of the text* was a far less commonly reported strategy (15.48%). It can be assumed that this strategy was probably perceived as a negative one and asso-

ciated with comprehension failure (like *giving up reading*—a "strategy" hardly reported).

In the area of Effectiveness (see Table 4 in Appendix B), all cohesive strategies were perceived positively in relation to proficient reading. Most participants reported that, in order to read fictional literary texts well in French, they should have a constructive comprehension of these texts. They believed they should understand the overall meaning of the text (100%), integrate their prior knowledge into the text (94.45%), construct a system of imagery (90.27%), discern its structure (88.88%) and anticipate textual content (66.66%).

Although a high proportion of the participants agreed that detailed comprehension of the text also conditioned efficient reading (70.83%), the majority of participants disagreed that all textual components should be understood (in terms of grammatical structures [52.77%] and vocabulary [63.89%]) in order to read well in a foreign language. Importantly, frequent use of the dictionary was negatively associated with successful reading (22.22% of agreements).

Similarities and differences were observed between what participants reported doing when reading (Confidence and Repair) and what they reported they should do to read successfully (Efficiency). All participants believed that the successful reader of French literary texts should be able to perceive the overall meaning of the text (100%). Concurrently, the majority of participants reported generally being able to construct the gist of stories they had read (72.37%). Similarly, most participants were aware of the importance of integrating prior knowledge (94.95%) and many of them reported being able to do so when reading (74.63%).

Some differences between what was thought to be done and what should be done ideally were also observed. This was the case with structure perception which was considered a successful strategy by most participants (88.88%) but reported to be used by less than half of them (49.34%). Similarly, while most participants viewed anticipation as a successful reading strategy (66.66%), very few of them reported being able to experience it (11.27%).

In relation to purely instrumental problem-solving strategies, no wide discrepancies were recorded between reported use (Repair) and perception (Efficiency). Most participants reported not trying systematically to recognise all unknown words and not trying to use the dictionary too often (19.49% of agreements). A large number of participants judged the latter strategy negatively (80.51%). While guessing at words was not reported by many participants (35.30%), it was only perceived as a successful strategy by half of the subject population (56.95%).

Conceptual differences between groups

The second and third research questions aimed to investigate the differences between the two groups of differing self-assessed proficiency in all four areas tested by the Metacognitive Questionnaire. In order to produce data, Fisher's exact test was preferred to Spearman's correlation on account of the small numbers to be tested. Fisher's exact test produced data on the associations between self-assessed proficiency and the forty-two statements of the metacognitive questionnaire. A level of .05 was chosen as the significance level.

In relation to the second research question, which investigated conceptual differences between the two groups of proficiency in the areas of Difficulty

and Repair, no evidence was found to distinguish the two groups: our results did not show any significant differences in the two areas tested (results are reported in Tables 5 and 6 in Appendix B). Consequently, we must conclude that both groups conceived the causes of reading difficulties and the actions they were generally able to implement to overcome these difficulties in a similar way.

The third research question intended to investigate possible differences between the two groups of self-assessed proficiency in terms of what participants reported they could do when reading and what they believed would foster successful FL reading. Contrary to the researcher's expectations, the tests showed that there was no significant difference between the SAP group and the SALP group in most cases relating to the areas of Effectiveness (see Table 7 in Appendix B). However, in the area of Confidence differences were recorded for four strategies (see Table 8 in Appendix B). The numbers and percentage of participants for each group were subsequently related to two categories of responses (see Table 9 in Appendix B): Strongly agree/Agree (1 + 2 on the Likert scale) and Neutral/Disagree/Strongly disagree (3 + 4 + 5 on the Likert scale). Results for the G group appear in the first row of each table to allow comparison with SALP and SAP.

These results indicate clearly that the two self-assessed proficiency groups (SAP and SALP) had opposite tendencies in relation to the four strategies presented above. For example, most SALP participants did not report confidence in using their prior knowledge and experience (28.57%) while all SAP participants did (100%). It must be pointed out that the results for the G group tended to follow those of the SAP group, while the results for the SALP group displayed a divergent tendency.

Incidentally, it is interesting to note that the four strategies are not isolated, but rather belong to the same coherence construction group. This would suggest that the only noticeable difference between the two self-assessed proficiency groups lay in the judgments of participants regarding their ability to distance themselves from the immediate local level of text and construct text as a whole: recognition of main information, connection of different parts of text, theme elaboration, and prior knowledge integration. However, these findings are tentative in the sense that not all coherence construction strategies showed significant associations. For example, anticipation and structure identification, two other cohesive strategies, did not.

These results are tentative and should be interpreted with caution. They do not warrant an explicit distinction between the participants who claimed to be proficient and those who claimed to be less proficient. Rather, the results suggest that Confidence is the area of reading in FL where significant differences may arise. Consequently, it should not be neglected.

CONCLUSION

This study has investigated the metacognitive aspects of reading by means of a questionnaire. The purpose of the study was to observe how first-year post-secondary students conceptualised FL reading, and whether self-assessed proficient readers had a different conception of reading from self-assessed less proficient ones. We found that a high proportion of participants were aware of the cohesive and constructive dimensions of reading. The first-year students

tested were not novice readers. Most of them were able to express a balanced view of reading. Indeed, they understood that, in order to be effective, FL reading must not only be about deciphering words or guessing at their meaning, it also involves higher-level integrative and cohesive strategies and behaviours. However, we also found that, on the whole, participants were mostly concerned with lexical difficulties which they perceived as the major impediment to reading comprehension.

The particular scope of this investigation makes it difficult to compare our results directly with the findings of other empirical studies which have also looked at the differences between proficient and less proficient readers (since these studies are mostly concerned with the transfer of skills from L1 to L2). Nevertheless, we have found evidence of two reading modes which we have termed "routine" (prioritising main points, text gist and text organisation) and "challenging" (requiring a focus on lexical and syntactical units through conscious problem-solving behaviour at local level). These two patterns are reminiscent of Block's (1986) "extensive" and "reflexive" modes, as well as Hosenfeld's (1984) and Carrell's (1989) "local" and "global" strategic approaches. The results produced by the Metacognitive Questionnaire tend to indicate that the Melbourne University students who participated in the study did not conceptualise reading as either altogether local or global. To some degree, each participant reported using both approaches. In effect, our observations do not corroborate a distinction between good and poor reading. This agrees with Sarig (1987) who demonstrated in her study that "[r]eaders were shown to be characterized by their own reading assets and reading drawbacks", thus stressing "the high degree of individuality of reading" (Sarig 1987:118).

It would be prudent to consider the results produced by the Metacognitive Questionnaire as merely suggestive, given that the reliability of self-assessment methods may be questioned. It must be stressed again that what readers *believe they do* is not necessarily *what they actually do*. However, this study is useful as a first step to further investigate the active role played by the reader in actual reading situations.

NOTES

1   Most studies carried out in the 1970s and 1980s (eg Olshavski 1976-1977, Hosenfeld 1984, Block 1986, Sarig 1987) aimed to study reading strategies and their use through think-aloud techniques. They tended to identify metacognitive strategies as part of an overall taxonomy of reading strategies and did not address directly the perception learners might have of the strategies they were using.

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APPENDIX A: METACOGNITIVE QUESTIONNAIRE

The following statements refer to **silent reading** in French of **fictional texts** studied in Part I.
Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement by circling the appropriate number.

1 = strongly agree   2 = agree   3 = neutral   4 = disagree   5 = strongly disagree

When reading silently a fictional text in French, I can always... (circle)

	strongly agree		=>	strongly disagree
1. anticipate what will come next in the text	1	2	3	4	5
2. recognise main points from secondary details	1	2	3	4	5
3. sense when I understand and when I don't	1	2	3	4	5
4. relate information which comes next in the text to previous information in the text	1	2	3	4	5
5. use my prior knowledge and experience to understand the content of the text	1	2	3	4	5
6. keep the gist of what I have just read in mind	1	2	3	4	5
7. keep the structure of what I have just read in mind	1	2	3	4	5
8. discern the theme of the text	1	2	3	4	5
9. appreciate aesthetic features of the text (e.g. style, register, figures of speech)	1	2	3	4	5
10. become emotionally involved	1	2	3	4	5
11. be drawn into the world of the story	1	2	3	4	5
12. construct vivid visual representations of situations	1	2	3	4	5
13. compare the author's ideology, moral values etc. against my own	1	2	3	4	5
14. relate what I read to what I have read in other texts	1	2	3	4	5

When reading silently fictional texts in French, if I don't understand something,... (circle)

	strongly agree		=>	strongly disagree
15. I keep reading and look for clarification further on	1	2	3	4	5
16. I go back to a point before the problematic part and reread from there	1	2	3	4	5
17. I reread the problematic part	1	2	3	4	5
18. I skip the difficult part and I keep on reading regardless of what I understand or don't, to get to the end of the text	1	2	3	4	5

	strongly agree		=>		strongly disagree
19. I look up all unknown words in the dictionary and translate the difficult part into English	1	2	3	4	5
20. I look up some unknown key words/references	1	2	3	4	5
21. I paraphrase mentally the difficult passage in French	1	2	3	4	5
22. I try to guess all unknown words/references from context	1	2	3	4	5
23. I make a note of unknown words/references and I check them after I have finished	1	2	3	4	5
24. I ask a classmate to clarify what I can't understand	1	2	3	4	5
25. I give up and stop reading	1	2	3	4	5

According to you, a successful reader of French in Textual Studies would do the following... (circle)

	strongly agree		=>		strongly disagree
26. recognise all words	1	2	3	4	5
27. recognise all grammatical structures	1	2	3	4	5
28. use a dictionary very often	1	2	3	4	5
29. guess at word meanings	1	2	3	4	5
30. focus on the details of the content	1	2	3	4	5
31. anticipate the contents of the text	1	2	3	4	5
32. understand the overall meaning of the text	1	2	3	4	5
33. integrate in the text what (s)he already knows about the topic, the genre, the cultural content	1	2	3	4	5
34. grasp the organisation of the text	1	2	3	4	5
35. visualise situations and characters	1	2	3	4	5

My reading of French fictional texts is generally impeded by... (circle)

	strongly agree		=>		strongly disagree
36. words that I have never seen before	1	2	3	4	5
37. the difficulty of understanding the meaning of words	1	2	3	4	5
38. the structure of sentences	1	2	3	4	5
39. the particular stylistic features	1	2	3	4	5
40. my insufficient knowledge of the cultural context	1	2	3	4	5
41. my inability to perceive the organisation of the text	1	2	3	4	5
42. my difficulty in entering the fictional world of the text	1	2	3	4	5

MERCI DE VOTRE PARTICIPATION!

APPENDIX B: RESULTS TABLES

When reading silently a fictional text in French, I can always...

		% of 1+2	% of 3+4+5
3.	sense when I understand and when I don't	94.45	5.55
5.	use my prior knowledge and experience to understand the content of the text	74.63	25.37
6.	keep the gist of what I have just read in mind	72.37	27.63
2.	recognise main points from secondary details	69.01	30.99
4.	relate information which comes next in the text to previous information in the text	68.05	31.95
11.	be drawn into the world of the story	61.97	38.03
12.	construct vivid visual representations of situations	60.87	39.13
13.	compare the author's ideology, moral values, etc. against my own	59.15	40.85
8.	discern the theme of the text	54.55	45.45
7.	keep the structure of what I have just read in mind	49.34	50.66
10.	become emotionally involved	47.88	52.12
9.	appreciate aesthetic features of the text (eg, style, register, figures of speech)	38.04	61.96
14.	relate what I read to what I have read in other texts	38.04	61.96
1.	anticipate what will come next in the text	11.27	88.73

Table 1:   *Strategic involvement in the area of Confidence*

My reading of French fictional texts is generally impeded by...

		% of 1+2	% of 3+4+5
36.	words that I have never seen before	73.25	26.75
37.	the difficulty of understanding the meaning of words	54.92	45.08
38.	the structure of sentences	42.25	57.75
39.	the particular stylistic features	39.45	60.55
41.	my inability to perceive the organisation of the text	23.94	76.06
40.	my insufficient knowledge of the cultural context	19.40	80.60
42.	my difficulty in entering the fictional world of the text	4.23	95.77

Table 2:   *Conceptualisation of reading difficulties*

When reading silently fictional texts in French, if I don't understand something,

		% of 1+2	% of 3+4+5
20.	I look up **some** unknown key words/references	90.14	9.86
17.	I reread the problematic part	88.73	11.27
16.	I go back to a point before the problematic part and reread from there	73.24	26.76
15.	I keep reading and look for clarification further on	61.09	38.91
24.	I ask a classmate to clarify what I can't understand	40.75	59.25
22.	I try to guess **all** unknown words/references from context	35.30	64.70
21.	I paraphrase mentally the difficult passage in French	33.80	66.20
23.	I make a note of unknown words/references and I check them **after** I have finished	30.98	69.02
19.	I look up **all** unknown words in the dictionary and translate the difficult part into English	19.49	80.51
18.	I skip the difficult part and I keep on reading regardless of what I understand or don't, to get to the end of the text	15.48	84.52
25.	I give up and stop reading	4.23	95.77

Table 3:   Conceptualisation of comprehension repair

According to you, a successful reader of French in Textual Studies would do the following...

		% of 1+2	% of 3+4+5
32.	understand the overall meaning of the text	100.00	0
33.	integrate in the text what s/he already knows about the topic, the genre, the cultural content	94.45	5.55
35.	visualise situations and characters	90.27	9.73
34.	grasp the organisation of the text	88.88	11.12
30.	focus on the details of the content	70.83	29.17
31.	anticipate the content of the text	66.66	33.34
29.	guess at word meanings	56.95	43.05
27.	recognise all grammatical structures	47.23	52.77
26.	recognise all words	36.11	63.89
28.	use a dictionary very often	22.22	77.78

Table 4:   Conceptualisation of efficient reading

My reading of French fictional texts is generally impeded by...

52.	words that I have never seen before	$p = 0.09$
53.	the difficulty of understanding the meaning of words	$p = 0.1$
54.	the structure of sentences	$p = 0.1$
55.	the particular stylistic features	$p > 0.95$
56.	my insufficient knowledge of the cultural context	$p = 0.4$
57.	my inability to perceive the organisation of the text	$p = 0.046$
58.	my difficulty in entering the fictional world of the text	$p = 0.07$

Table 5: Differences between SAP and SALP groups in the area of Difficulty

When reading silently fictional texts in French, if I don't understand something

15.	I keep reading and look for clarification further on	$p = 0.1$
16.	I go back to a point before the problematic part and reread from there	$p > 0.95$
17.	I reread the problematic part	$p = 0.07$
18.	I skip the difficult part and I keep on reading regardless of what I understand or don't, to get to the end of the text	$p = 0.7$
19.	look up all unknown words in the dictionary and translate the difficult part into English	$p = 0.07$
20.	I look up some unknown key words/references	$p = 0.1$
21.	I paraphrase mentally the difficult passage in French	$p = 0.7$
22.	I try to guess all unknown words/references from context	$p = 0.04$
23.	I make a note of unknown words/references and I check them after I have finished	$p = 0.4$
24.	I ask a classmate to clarify what I can't understand	$p > 0.95$
25.	I give up and stop reading	$p = 0.2$

Table 6: Differences between SAP and SALP groups in the area of Repair

According to you, a successful reader of French in Textual Studies would do the following...

26.	recognise all words	$p = 0.7$
27.	recognise all grammatical structures	$p = 0.05$
28.	use a dictionary very often	$p = 0.7$
29.	guess at word meanings	$p > 0.95$
30.	focus on the details of the content	$p = 0.3$
31.	anticipate the contents of the text	$p = 0.4$
32.	understand the overall meaning of the text	$p > 0.95$
33.	integrate in the text what (s)he already knows about the topic, the genre, the cultural content	$p > 0.95$
34.	grasp the organisation of the text	$p = 0.5$
35.	visualise situations and characters	$p > 0.95$

Table 7: Differences between SAP and SALP groups in the area of Effectiveness

When reading silently a fictional text in French, I can always...

1.	anticipate what will come next in the text	$p = 0.1$
2.	recognise main points from secondary details	$p = 0.009$
3.	sense when I understand and when I don't	$p = 0.2$
4.	relate information which comes next in the text to previous information in the text	$p < 0.001$
5.	use my prior knowledge and experience to understand the content of the text	$p < 0.001$
6.	keep the gist of what I have just read in mind	$p = 0.046$
7.	keep the structure of what I have just read in mind	$p = 0.2$
8.	discern the theme of the text	$p = 0.009$
9.	appreciate aesthetic features of the text	$p = 0.07$
10.	become emotionally involved	$p = 0.06$
11.	be drawn into the world of the story	$p = 0.06$
12.	construct vivid visual representations of situations	$p = 0.1$
13.	compare the author's ideology, moral values, etc. against my own	$p = 0.3$
14.	relate what I read to what I have read in other texts	$p = 0.07$

Table 8:   *Differences between SAP and SALP groups in the area of Confidence*

• recognition of main points from secondary details			• ability to relate information which comes next in the text to previous information		
S2	1+2	3+4+5	S4	1+2	3+4+5
G	69.01%	30.99%	G	68.05%	31.95%
SALP	40.00%	60.00%	SALP	27.27%	72.73%
SAP	81.25%	18.75%	SAP	100.00%	0.00%

• ability to use prior knowledge and experience to understand text content			• ability to discern theme of the text		
S5	1+2	3+4+5	S8	1+2	3+4+5
G	74.63%	25.37%	G	54.55%	45.45%
SALP	28.57%	71.43%	SALP	28.57%	71.43%
SAP	100.00%	0.00%	SAP	81.25%	18.75%

Table 9:   *Detailed comparison between groups of self-assessed proficiency*