

Predictors of success in French reading for LESLLA learners in Quebec: developing tools to measure key variables

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In second language acquisition (SLA) reading research, several models identify variables capable of predicting success in reading in second language (L2). Among these models, that of Bernhardt (2010) maintains that two key variables would explain at least 50% of reading success in second language: literacy skills in the first language (L1, explaining 20%) and knowledge of the L2 (explaining 30%). Knowing the predictive power of these variables makes it possible, among other things, to orient the didactic interventions of teachers. It can allow us, for example, to determine if it is better to target the development of literacy skills in L1 before tackling reading in L2, or if it is better to target the development of oral skills in L2 before tackling reading in L2.

However, this model, generally well received in research and practice in SLA reading, was developed from decades of research where LESLLA learners were largely underrepresented (Bigelow et Tarone, 2004; Ortega, 2019). To our knowledge, there is no evidence that the same variables have the same predictive power in L2 reading proficiency of learners who cannot necessarily rely on their L1 literacy skills, particularly their L1 reading skills. Therefore, the objective of our PhD project is to determine to what extent 1) reading skills in L1 and 2) oral comprehension in French can predict success in reading in French among LESLLA learners enrolled in French L2 courses in Quebec, Canada.

In this presentation, we will present the tools we have developed to measure our two predictive variables, reading proficiency in L1 and oral comprehension in French, as well as our dependent variable, reading proficiency in French. We will also provide details on how we anticipate the unfolding of our data collection with LESLLA learners.

References

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- Bigelow, M., & Tarone, E. (2004). The Role of Literacy Level in Second Language Acquisition: Doesn't Who We Study Determine What We Know? *TESOL Quarterly*, 38(4), 689-700. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3588285>
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Bio

Alexandra is a PhD student at the Université du Québec à Montreal. Her research interests include the reading development of LESLLA learners, the inclusion of the first language in second language classes for LESLLA learners, and the development of measuring tools for assessing the literacy skills of LESLLA learners.