Spring 5-1-2015

Use of Phonetics in the Beginner French Classroom: An Analysis of Textbooks

Melissa B. Scarbrough
University of Connecticut - Storrs, melissa.scarbrough@uconn.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.uconn.edu/srhonors_theses

Part of the Curriculum and Instruction Commons, First and Second Language Acquisition Commons, French Linguistics Commons, and the Phonetics and Phonology Commons

Recommended Citation
http://digitalcommons.uconn.edu/srhonors_theses/464
Use of Phonetics in the Beginner French Classroom: An Analysis of Textbooks

Melissa B. Scarbrough
University of Connecticut
The world is increasingly becoming more open, more globalized. Regardless of the pros and cons of globalization, it has become a force in politics, economics, and effects daily life in the United States. Despite this force, though, only 18% of Americans were cited (Skorton & Altschuler, 2012) to be able to speak a second language, leaving the United States at a marked disadvantage on the world stage. In another study, Zeigler and Camarote (2014) reported that one in five U.S. residents (including native, immigrant, and illegal persons) speaks a foreign language at home. The Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, had multiple conferences throughout 2010 and 2011 addressing this issue, declaring that, “to prosper economically and to improve relations with other countries…Americans need to read, speak and understand other languages.” (Skorton & Altschuler, 2012). There is obvious need for more Americans to be able to communicate, abroad and at home; thus, a strengthened need for world language education.

As a result of this need, it is important to understand how people learn a language at varying ages, and how educators can best support that learning. There are many skills and knowledge areas in which educators in World Language classrooms are expected to work: culture, grammar, listening, reading, speaking, and writing.

With respect to cultivating linguistic capability in the classroom, recent research suggests a strong relationship between phonetic knowledge and over all linguistic ability in a world language within beginner level classes. It is surmised to be as a result of a psychological connection as detailed in the phonological loop theory. Research that takes this theory into account adds to it by describing how phonetic and phonological knowledge support reading and writing skills and student self-efficacy in the L2. This, as
well as the connections to the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) standards is discussed further below.

**Linguistics and Classroom Trends.**

World Language classrooms use a lot of Linguistics, most specifically in an area of Applied Linguistics known as Second Language Acquisition (SLA). This subcategory emphasizes determining the learning differences between a first language (L1), and a second language (L2). This is particularly relevant to World Language education because most students in the United States are monolingual speakers of English. Knowledge, and theories of the differences between L1 and L2 acquisition may strengthen the practices of educators.

Multiple organizations have been created to organize the information related to linguistics and SLA to make it practically applicable to educators. The leading organization in the United States is the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). In addition to offering the official certification for World Language educators intending to teach in United States, ACTFL conducts its own research, and has established standards of fluency for teachers and proficiency for students. Their model of World-Readiness Standards (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project), an attempt at holistic guidelines to World Language education, take the name the 5 C’s and are described as follows:

- **Communication:** ability to speak spontaneously (unrehearsed speech in various contexts) in the target language.
- **Cultures:** appreciation of cultures and cultural perspectives of the speakers of the target language (usually of native speakers, but not always).
• Connections: reinforced understanding of diverse perspectives.

• Comparisons: greater understanding of both one’s one native language and culture upon reflection, and contrast to that of the target language.

• Communities: the relationship of the target language to local, and global communities, in terms of enrichment, and new possibilities.

The importance of this organization to SLA is its influence in American classrooms, considering educators are expected to align their teaching methods to those mentioned above. While the ACTFL standards are built around current research, following the guidelines does not guarantee successful instruction. For example, Communicative Language Teaching (CTL) is the most recent form of instruction supported by the organization; it is a widely favored form that is modeled after L1 acquisition techniques. Within this approach, World Language educators are expected to use the target language for at least 90% of instructional time, and to encourage considerable use of the target language by students as well. Linguistic research supports movement away from a strictly grammatical approach, which had come before (Bakker, Takashima, van Hell, Janzen, and McQueen, 2014; Gullick, & Booth, 2014; Whong, 2012). The modalities, speaking, listening, reading, and writing, are what are emphasized now. However, it is difficult to determine whether or not CLT is properly implemented in many classrooms because of the nature of CLT as an “umbrella” term that does not supply more structured examples or practical applications of CLT. Since it is a relatively recent development in educational research, CLT is consistently being researched, and more specific information is closer to being provided more readily.
CLT is an incredible shift from such methods as Audio-lingual and Grammar-Translation (despite their continued popularity) for its emphasis on spontaneous language creation, and also implicit teaching methods. While neither child nor adult seems to learn better or worse with either method (Lichtman, 2013), implicit teaching has been linked to the desired spontaneity in speech. At the same time, explicit teaching fosters the metalinguistic awareness that is wanted for the advanced stages of SLA (Whong, 2013). The caveat that is presented then is the benefits of explicit instruction in certain areas, like morphology where metalinguistic awareness can be cultivated.

**Morphology and Vocabulary as they Relate to SLA.**

Undoubtedly one of the most important areas of SLA, vocabulary, is a leading indicator of overall ability in a language as a result of its obvious significance to any language. This is supported by indications of deficient lexical knowledge acting as a main cause of L2 learners falling short of fluency, according to the PAROLE corpus (Hilton, 2008). Larrota (2011, and Ellis, 2002) echoed this by explaining that comprehension of language is dependent on lexical knowledge.

A favorite in terms of acquiring L2 vocabulary is through instruction on morphology. This makes sense considering morphology studies the patterns and rules that govern the making or structure of words. In several studies (Bedore & Leonard, 2000; Brooks, Kempe, & Soinov, 2006; Morin, 2003), researchers used morphology as an aid and instructional tool to help second language (L2) learners grasp and recognize patterns in vocabulary, and tenses. Key emphases included lexical morphology, inflectional morphology, known commonly as verb conjugations, degree forms (bigger v. biggest), and creating plurals, etc. (Zwitserlood, 2003). Researchers in these studies agreed that
vocabulary is an exceedingly important and difficult part of learning another language “...because vocabulary is the key not only to literacy, but also to oral and written communication...” (Morin, 2003, p. 202). Thus, it makes logical sense to examine whether or not demonstrating the relationships between words and their possible roots or affixes aids students in a second language. However, certain challenges were presented, suggesting that using morphology to enhance vocabulary in L2 was not as efficient as was hoped.

Hu (2010) made the argument that Morphological Awareness (MA) differed considerably in terms of students’ L2 and their L1 as a result of vocabulary breadth. Larger vocabularies in the L1 make discovering and then applying morphological patterns much less difficult; students’ vocabularies are typically much more limited in their L2 than in their L1, thus vocabulary knowledge became a strong predictor of MA for L2, making the results show the inverse of what was desired.

Collectively, the application of morphological strategies and information seems less important for the initial stages of SLA, the likes of which would be focused on in most world language classrooms in the United States. It is, though, beneficial for advanced stages. Also, it is worth mentioning because of its strong following in research, and in classrooms. The uses of morphology in SLA are often argued to, like vocabulary, be the most important aspects of SLA.

How this research can affect world language classrooms. What this means for the classroom is that vocabulary instruction is better at increasing proficiency than grammar instruction at the lower levels. A large and well-maintained vocabulary will allow students to find patterns in the L2 without direct instruction. It helps students to
better determine the meaning of new words, and to increase their abilities in each skill area/ mode. The complexities of much about grammar in the L2 can support vocabulary learning, but an L2 is better learned and understood when there is a solid base of vocabulary knowledge. An example of this in the French language classroom can be the relationship between the verbs *venir, tenir, devenir, retenir*, etc. These verbs are not only conjugated in the same way across tenses, but they are irregular, which breaks the normal patterns of IR verbs. This research suggests that if students know the meaning of the words, and have familiarity with them, they will be better capable of interpreting novel words of the same pattern without explicit direction. That is not to say that there should not be explicit direction; however, explicit direction is better used at advanced levels of the language because metalinguistic awareness and MA are supported by that vocabulary knowledge.

This research also aligns to the ACTFL standards in that it suggests practices that insist on the growth of a mental bank, so to speak, of words to support initial proficiency before developing metalinguistic proficiency. This research can be related to the standards under communication, 1.1-1.3 as vocabulary supports expression, and over all comprehension in the L2, at later levels.

**Phonology, Phonetics, and the Classroom.**

Another category within linguistics that is particularly imperative to SLA, but often considered secondary, is phonetics. Several researchers (Erler, 2004; Erler & Macaro, 2011; Woore, 2009) have suggested that implicit teaching of phonetics and phonology does not work. This is especially so where an English L1 is attempting to learn French L2, two phonologically “deep” Grapheme-Phoneme Correspondence (GPC,
otherwise known as Phonological Awareness (PA) systems (Erler, & Macaro, 2011).

This matters for World Language classrooms, particularly of French, in the United States because of recent research (discussed below) that has highlighted how phonological understanding can increase ability in vocabulary, reading, and writing. It does not only support phonetics that most evidently affects listening and oral abilities in an L2.

First, it is important to note that there is a proposed difference, which is still under discussion, between phonology and phonetics. Phonetics is often described as the physical properties of a language involved in the act of articulation, whereas phonology “might be characterized as the study of the organization of those sounds — the functional properties of language. It relates specifically to the brain. This fact makes it more abstract (but not simpler) than phonetics. And unlike phonetics, phonology only makes sense in the context of a particular language or set of languages,” (Marlett, 2001, p. 4).

The phonological loop as it relates to SLA. Supporting the statement that phonology relates not only to the brain, but also to language acquisition, is the phonological loop (or articulatory loop) as a part in Baddeley and Hitch’s working memory model (1974, as revised by Baddeley, 1986, 2000). This theory hypothesizes the phonological loop as a concept within a framework. This framework includes a central executive, visuospatial sketchpad, and episodic buffer, that aims to explain cognitive development of language. The phonological loop has within it a subcomponent called the phonological store, which for a brief time (about 2 seconds) holds a temporary representation of an utterance in the form of a phoneme sequence. The second subcomponent is articulatory rehearsal that strengthens the representation, or ameliorates it; this can manifest in the form of sub-vocal or vocal speech. The retrieval of the
phonemic sequence helps to maintain the information as a part of working memory (WM) instead of as a piece of short-term memory (STM). With continued activation the sequence and its accompanying concept move to long-term memory (LTM), by way of the episodic buffer.

Research supports the role of phonology and the phonological loop in bolstering vocabulary, most evidently in beginning students in a second, even third, language (Engel de Abreu & Gathercole, 2012; Engel de Abreu, Gathercole, & Martin, 2011; Gathercole, Service, Hitch, & Martin, 1997; Nicolay & Ponclet, 2013). From this research it is argued that, “If children merely attend to the primitive characteristics of the salient acoustic shape of the foreign word, phonological representations might be poorly defined and consequently could not be properly encoded in short-term memory” (Engel de Abreu et al., 2012, p. 982). Considering that STM can be argued to be a “driving force behind both native and foreign vocabulary acquisitions” (Engel de Abreu et al., 2011) the need to support the proper encoding of distinct phonological representations is paramount in solidifying a word in LTM.

Additionally, from the WM model, the visuospatial sketchpad takes in visual information, such as orthographic representations of a language. Once taken in, it will be combined with the phonological information and long-term information within the episodic buffer. This particular function is what makes Baddeley’s theory unique; processes can happen in tandem throughout categorization, and still be understood by the central executive. Baddeley has acknowledged that areas like the visuospatial sketchpad and central executive need to be better researched for a more comprehensive understanding of how the binding between visuospatial and the phonological loop occurs.
This is needed to determine how visual and phonetic representations bind to a concept. Returning to the phonological loop, it has been the basis for much of the current research in phonology, especially as a part of first and second language acquisition. The binding process can be thought of as a phonemic sequence passing between the phonological store and the episodic buffer into LTM as describable as encoding. Also, the process of retrieving that information is described as decoding. The ability of decoding, since visuospatial and phonological information is bound, is seen in modes outside of listening and speaking. “Research with monolingual children indicates that oral language skills impact on reading acquisition via two distinct paths. In the early stages, oral language skills support phonological awareness which in turn has a direct effect on the acquisition of decoding abilities,” (Chiang & Rvanchew, 2007, p. 302).

**Phonological knowledge and its relationship to reading and writing.** Woore (2009) stated that proficient decoders can access phonological information via written words making phonological knowledge a key to reading. Woore also found that in the 94 students starting in 2006 and 85 students at the end in 2007, decoding abilities had seen no progress between taking a Read Aloud Test (RAT) at the beginning, then at the end of their 7th year in school. This could be because of the tendency to rely on students gaining this information implicitly, as Woore suggested thus, he recommended explicitly teaching phonological decoding. Lynn Erler (2004; Erler & Macaro, 2011) had found similar results and concluded that decoding required firm knowledge of grapheme-phoneme correspondence (PA) gained through explicit teaching of this. Additionally the studies pointed to two surprising outcomes linked to poor decoding ability in learning French as an L2 or foreign language: Motivation, and self-efficacy in the language were
significantly affected by it. Indeed, poor decoding was so pervasive and powerful that, in
the 2004 study, which included 359 students in England, students seemed to be
experiencing a similar situation as those with dyslexia in the foreign language.

Theoretically, supporting phonological skills leads to strong phonological
understanding of the L2. This, in turn, is related to a profound vocabulary, which then
guides morphological prowess and metalinguistic capabilities. These skills, and
intelligences manifest as greater progress in all the modalities, as phonology aids in
phonetics during speech production and listening, and the bolstered vocabulary in reading
and writing, which in all is greater proficiency, and possibly self-efficacy.

What the phonological loop means to educators. The theorists behind the
phonological loop have surmised that information about the sound of a word is held
momentarily (~ 2 seconds) in STM, and that through rehearsal (verbal or mental
repetition) then moves that phonetic information to WM (Baddeley, 2003). Continued
rehearsal pushes that information to LTM. The complexity behind this process is in the
episodic buffer as it can simultaneously combine sound information, with written
information, and with rehearsal articulatory information. So it is theorized that this
process, especially the connection between STM and WM, is a primary force behind
vocabulary acquisition. As discussed in the previous section, this is proposed to be an
exceedingly important focus for elementary language levels. Also, since sound
information and written information are combined through the episodic buffer, students’
abilities to understand the phonetics of a language has an effect on their abilities to read
and write, not only hear and speak.
Additionally, researchers have found that students who were not explicitly taught the phonetics of a language were not able to make the phonological, conceptual relationships that support SLA at all levels. This is proposed to have negative effects on students’ self-efficacy in the L2, especially where there is a “deep” Grapheme-Phoneme Correspondence, like in French and English. Learners of French in England, according to Erler (2004; Erler & Macaro, 2011) were even showing signs of difficulty with French that was similar to the experience of dyslexia. So, to support growth in the modes of communication, as desired by ACTFL, and aimed for in the world language classroom, it is necessary to support phonetics, especially at the beginning stages of SLA.

Given this evidence that maintains the importance of developing phonology and phonetics in the world language classroom, this study aims to start considering activities in the French world language classroom that would encourage cultivation of phonetics skills. I approached these aims by examining some of the most commonly used resources and supplements in world language classrooms, which are often textbooks.

**Methods**

Do French as a foreign language textbooks have sections or activities that support the instruction of phonetics in the classroom?

In this study I took a sample of three beginning level French textbooks commonly used in the school districts throughout the state of Connecticut, United States. These books were determined through emailing teachers, department chairs, and principals of schools K-12 that offer French throughout the state. The books used were: 1. Allez Viens! © 2006 published by Holt, Reinhart, & Windston, 2. Bien Dit © 2008 published by Holt, 3. Bon Voyage © 2002 published by McGraw Hill.
Once the books were identified and acquired, exercises across chapters/sections were catalogued based on two factors: a) What skill the instructions in the book intended an exercise to be used for, and b) In unmarked, or inconsistent exercises what the directions asked of students to complete. Most of the books conveniently assigned their exercises with images denoting what type of skill an activity was aimed for. For example, many of the writing activities had the image of a pencil or pen next to the directions, and a speaker or two people talking as an image next to speaking activities. Some exercises, though did not have any images and so were catalogued based more closely on the directions. Also, the inconsistent exercises were usually found in instructional boxes; these would sometimes have no mark, or the mark would be contrary to the directions. This would look like an activity marked for writing but with directions that said to read.

The skills marked in the catalog were listening, reading, speaking, writing, and other. *Grammar and Culture* (shortened to Grammar in the graphs) was determined consistently as either an exercise that required application, or assessment of grammatical knowledge, an exercise that asked for cultural information reflection in L1, or a “hybrid” activity, such as one that included both a reading and speaking component it in.

Supplemental exercises, as seen in some books as review, or test preparation activities, were included in the catalog. All regular lessons and the activities, instructional sections, and notes were included in the analysis. However, extra activities, usually presented as a part of the Appendix, or at the end of the book were not included. Some of these included additional stories or articles about culture, as well as grammar exercises.

Additionally, sections dedicated to pronunciation/phonetics instruction were cataloged too. Some of these sections were specifically marked, and others included the
information with a grammar concept. Both of these types of instructional activity were recorded, as well as if there were follow up exercises to support the learning, and application of the phonetics concept throughout the chapter. In all, through the three books, 1,999 activities and 526 instructional pieces were analyzed.

Results:

Textbook 1

Skill-Based Exercises: 683 activities were analyzed in Allez Viens! with about 57 activities per chapter with 12 chapters. Observations on the activities in the book have shown connectedness between exercises for example listening exercises usually relates to vocabulary and grammar. The activities have many visuals, with images or diagrams every other page at the greatest distance, even towards the end of the book. There are not many fill-in-the-blank types of exercises, though these activities are categorized under grammar exercises. Each chapter has only between 2-6 exercises of this type.

The first book has shown that only the grammar exercises are increasing throughout, despite occasional dips, as seen in Figure 1. Speaking exercises, listening exercises, and writing exercises gradually decreased, while reading exercises experience a slight increase towards the end of the book, as can be seen in the first chart. Grammar exercises hold the highest percentage of exercises of 42% of the exercises available, and the next leading emphasis is speaking at only 19%, as can be seen in the second chart, as can be seen in Figure 2.
Figure 1. Trends of skill-based exercises in Book 1.

Figure 2. Break down of exercises throughout Book 1.

**Phonetics instruction:** This book has a section for phonetic information in each of the chapters. Some of the concepts addressed include intonation, *la liaison* (in French consonant sounds can be moved to attach to vowel sounds according to the positions of either letter), letter sounds such as the French *r*, and nasal vowels from letter
combinations such as *an, am, en, em*. As the book continues towards later chapters, more than one example is introduced at a time, going from practicing one sound for grapheme-phoneme connections, to about three for each later chapter, with individual sounds essentially receiving less practice or differentiation.

All of the pronunciation instructional pieces have between two and three follow-up activities, which include one listening, and one speaking activity. Information outside the pronunciation boxes, though, is seldom repeated. Also, compared to the amount of instruction on grammar and vocabulary have, phonetic instruction is seriously lacking, as can be seen in Figure 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Nature of the instruction:</th>
<th>Boxes/Exercises with Explicit Phonetics Instruction:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1: Faison connaissance!</td>
<td>Direction on intonation when speaking.</td>
<td>1- Instructional box</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2: Vive l’école!</td>
<td>Introduction to <em>La Liaison</em>.</td>
<td>1- Instructional box</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: Tout pour la rentrée</td>
<td>Direction on the French “r”.</td>
<td>1- Instructional box</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4: Sports et passe-temps</td>
<td>Direction on <em>u</em> and <em>y</em>, and mention of intonation.</td>
<td>2- Instructional box, and one mention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5: On va au café?</td>
<td>Direction on <em>ã</em>.</td>
<td>1- Instructional box</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6: Amusons-nous!</td>
<td>Direction on <em>æ</em>, and <em>ö</em>.</td>
<td>1- Instructional box</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7: La famille</td>
<td>Direction on <em>ā</em>, <em>ē</em>, and <em>ē̃</em>.</td>
<td>1- Instructional box</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8: Au marché</td>
<td>Direction on <em>o</em> and <em>ö</em>.</td>
<td>1- Instructional box</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 9: Au téléphone</td>
<td>Direction on <em>e</em> and <em>ë</em>.</td>
<td>1- Instructional box</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 10: Dans un magasin de vêtements</td>
<td>Direction on <em>j</em>, <em>w</em>, and <em>y</em>.</td>
<td>1- Instructional box</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 11: Vive les vacances!</td>
<td>Direction on aspirated <em>h</em>, <em>t</em>, <em>ʃ</em>, and <em>ɲ</em>.</td>
<td>1- Instructional box</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 12: En ville</td>
<td>Review.</td>
<td>1- Instructional box</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Textbook 2

**Skill-Based Exercises:** Bien Dit also has the chapters organized into multiple divisions. The chapters have two parts, each with two sub-parts that organize the exercises according to what each sub-part is focused on, which looks like vocabulary 1, grammar 1, vocabulary 2, and grammar 2. There are not as many images or diagrams as a part of the activities used in this book as there had been in the first. There are also more rote-learning tasks and multiple-choice questions in this book than the previous. There were a total of 582 activities across 10 chapters.

The second book has a decrease, whether gradual or more noticeable, of listening, reading, and speaking exercises, while there is an increase in writing activities, as seen in Figure 4. Grammar seems to decrease as well, considering the large difference in availability of these types of exercises from the beginning to the middle and end of the book.

*Figure 3. Explicit instruction throughout Book 1.*
Figure 5 demonstrates how the exercises in this book are more even in distribution than in the first, with the difference between the largest category (speaking at 26%) and the next largest (shared by both grammar and listening at 23%) is a mere 3%, or about 2 exercises difference.

**Figure 4.** Trends of skill-based exercises in Book 2.

### Bien Dit: trends of skill-based exercises

- **Listening exercises**
- **Reading exercises**
- **Writing exercises**
- **Speaking exercises**
- **Grammar exercises**
Figure 5. Break down of exercises throughout Book 2.

**Phonetics instruction:** There is little follow up about phonetic concepts throughout the text and is usually seen, if seen, as a side note such as: *Avoir* in the present tense with the subjects: *nous, vous, ils*. With these subjects *avoir* looks like *nous avons*, *vous avez*, and *ils ont*. When these are spoken, though, use the concept *la liaison* which explains that where a consonant is the last letter of a word preceding another word that begins with a vowel, the sound of that letter will attach/be carried over to the other word. This makes these sound like: *nu zavɔ̃* (nous avons), *vu zave* (vous avez), *il zɔ̃* (ils ont).

Beyond this concept, linke to the grammar that introduced it, there are only a handful of exercises or instructional boxes that bring back this information, as noted in Figure 6. In some of the activities these concepts were explained as the difference in
pronunciations between an adjective describing something feminine and the significance of ç. These concepts are described as something feminine is given an “e”, which then means that the consonant it follows is stressed, whereas it is usually not pronounced when describing a male object. For example, petit versus petite is pəti versus pətit. As for ‘ç’, this takes on the sound of s. These last two concepts, though, were not given space in an instructional box, but were mentioned as a part of listening activities. As a result of this organization there are not many activities that connect phonetic information to other skills, such as orthographic ability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Tables/ Exercises with Explicit Phonetics Instruction:</th>
<th>Nature of the instruction:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1: Salut, les copains!</td>
<td>4- two instructional boxes, two mentions.</td>
<td>Direct instruction on accents, including aigue (´), grave (´), circunflexe (´), tréma (¨), and cédille (ç) and intonation. Mention of la liaison.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2: Qu’est-ce qui te plait?</td>
<td>3- one instructional box, two mentions.</td>
<td>Direct instruction on la liaison, and mention of intonation and la liaison.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: Comment est ta famille?</td>
<td>2- one instructional box, one mention.</td>
<td>Direction on French r, and mention of la liaison.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4: Mon année scolaire</td>
<td>1- Instructional box.</td>
<td>Direction on nasal vowel â.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5: Le temps libre</td>
<td>2- one instructional box, one side-mention.</td>
<td>Direction on s and z, with side mention of intonation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6: Bon appétit!</td>
<td>1- Instructional box</td>
<td>Direction on ë.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7: On fait les magasins?</td>
<td>1- Instructional box</td>
<td>Direction on j, w, and û.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8: À la maison</td>
<td>1- Instructional box</td>
<td>Direction on â.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 9: Allons en ville!</td>
<td>1- Instructional box</td>
<td>Direction on y, and u.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 10: Enfin les vacances!</td>
<td>1- one instructional box.</td>
<td>Direction on t, and nj.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 6. Explicit instruction throughout Book 2.

Book 3

**Skill-Based Exercises:** In Bon Voyage there was a total of 734 activities across 14 chapters. At the beginning the activities, for any mode or skill, are simple, as would be expected of a text designed to support beginners in French. Most of the instruction is vocabulary based, with the main vocabulary instructional pages having a listening option. Both the vocabulary and the grammar, as with the other books, are broken down into about two sections, with small additional columns or boxes for additional scaffolding. The modes are often spaced so that there are not, for example, two writing exercises immediately next to each other. As the chapters progress certain exercises get longer, mostly reading exercises. Grammar-based exercises increase too; they are usually in the form of blanks that need to be filled with such things as the correct article or conjugation of a given verb.

The trends for the third book are the most erratic, and can be seen in Figure 7; despite this, by using the line of the trends, as viewable in Figure 8, it is possible to
determine the overall direction of each trend. Both reading and listening exercises are slightly negative, in that the points fall lower and lower overall, despite the positive points towards the end. Also, in contrast to the illusion of an increase in activities for the exercises under writing and grammar, their trend lines are almost flat, suggesting a lack of change overall in activities available for those skills. Finally, there is an evident increase in available activities for speaking, even in comparison to the deep dips in exercises available in particular chapters.

In Figure 9, rather than the trends of exercises over the book, the availability of the skills is displayed, with speaking holding a majority at 30%, and the following most available skill-based practices being grammar and writing, at 27% and 26%. This is a difference of between 1 and 2 exercises a chapter between speaking and grammar.

![Bon Voyage: trend of skill-based exercises](image)

*Figure 7. Trend of skill-based exercises throughout Book 3.*
Figure 8. Trend of skill-based exercises with trend lines in Book 3.

Figure 9. Break down of exercises throughout Book 3.

**Phonetics instruction:** This final book is almost a combination of the first two books in respect to its organization of phonetics information. In each chapter there are instructional boxes for explicitly stating the sounds of particular letters and letter
constructions in French, while also retouching on the concept of *la liaison* in multiple grammar instruction boxes in several chapters. Additionally, each of the boxes that are dedicated to pronunciation have between two and three activities to practice, though most of the other activities do not include these concepts directly. By far, there are more phonetic activities in *Bon Voyage* than either of the two previously mentioned textbooks. Despite this, when compared to the time spent on grammar and vocabulary concepts, phonetics instruction is still overwhelmingly unsatisfactory, as seen in Figure 10.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Nature of the instruction:</th>
<th>Boxes/Exercises with Explicit Phonetics Instruction:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 1: Une amie et un ami</strong></td>
<td>The direct instruction is on the stress in speaking, and the side-mention about <em>la liaison.</em></td>
<td>2- one instructional box, one side-mention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 2: Les cours et les profs</strong></td>
<td>Direct instruction on the silence of final consonants, and two side-mentions of <em>la liaison.</em></td>
<td>3- one instructional box, two side-mentions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 3: Pendant et après les cours</strong></td>
<td>Direct instruction on <em>pronouncing e and o in French, side mention of la liaison.</em></td>
<td>2- one instructional box, one side-mention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 4: La famille et la maison</strong></td>
<td>Direction on â and side-mention maintaining <em>la liaison.</em></td>
<td>5- one instructional box, and 4 side-mentions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 5: Au café et au restaurant</strong></td>
<td>Instruction on <em>the French r,</em> and side-mention of <em>la liaison.</em></td>
<td>3- one instructional box, one side-mention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 6: La nourriture et les courses</strong></td>
<td>Instruction on <em>œ.</em></td>
<td>1- one instructional box.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 7: Les vêtements</strong></td>
<td>Direct instruction on <em>f,</em> and side-mention of <em>la liaison.</em></td>
<td>2- one instructional box, one side-mention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 8: L’aéroport et l’avion</strong></td>
<td>Direct instruction on <em>l,</em> and a side-mention of <em>la liaison.</em></td>
<td>2- one instructional box, and one side-mention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 9: La gare et le train</strong></td>
<td>Direct instruction on <em>ɔ̃</em> and <em>ɛ̃,</em> and 3 side-mentions of <em>la liaison.</em></td>
<td>4- one instructional box, 3 side-mentions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 10: Les sports</strong></td>
<td>Direct instruction on <em>la</em></td>
<td>2- one instructional box.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this study I investigated whether or not commonly used French as a foreign language textbooks support phonetics instruction in the classroom. Of the three books examined, two of them give the explicit explanation needed (Erler, 2004; Erler & Macaro, 2011), rather than implicit, with English learners of French, as a result of French’s “deep” Grapheme-Phoneme Correspondence. Both Book 1 and Book 3 offer some rehearsal, as

Figure 10. Explicit instruction of Phonetics throughout Book 3.

Discussion

In this study I investigated whether or not commonly used French as a foreign language textbooks support phonetics instruction in the classroom. Of the three books examined, two of them give the explicit explanation needed (Erler, 2004; Erler & Macaro, 2011), rather than implicit, with English learners of French, as a result of French’s “deep” Grapheme-Phoneme Correspondence. Both Book 1 and Book 3 offer some rehearsal, as
suggested from the Phonological Loop Theory, in order to encourage movement of the information about a concept to go from STM, to WM, and finally to LTM. However, instructional activities that offer specific information about the French phonetic system rarely have satisfactory follow-up. Though there are exercises that rehearse the phonetic concept with the instructional section, this does not guarantee movement of this information from STM to even WM, let alone LTM. Also, speaking, writing, and “other” activities showed the greatest increase throughout the books. Even though speaking is the rehearsal of the information that is needed for LTM, it does not establish needed sound information with the phonological store. This is important because the sound information that is formed from listening is what is put through the episodic buffer and combined with information from other modes, like writing and reading thus forming the stronger comprehension that is desired. Ultimately, two of the three textbooks did support the teaching of phonetics concepts in the classroom, though they did not provide a lot of support for the application and assessment of these concepts.

**Relationship to the Standards.**

The ACTFL standards urge communication that is unconstrained, and able to be used across limitless situations as natural conversation is. The standards, too, encourage an approach that is dynamic and authentic in nature. This is not to say that there was not good information, but that the presentation of the information is not authentic, and that activities to rehearse the information are inauthentic too. For example: all of the books include many speaking activities; however, most of the time, especially in Book 3, models were given and the directions were for students to essentially copy the model’s
form. This takes the focus off of spontaneous conversation and is reminiscent of the Audio-Lingual method rather than the research and reform-supported CLT method.

**Implications for Educators**

While textbooks are not the only aspects of a classroom, this information is still important in respect to limitations of certain materials. Textbooks are some of the most readily available instructional support materials there are in the United States. So, knowing how these materials can support, and how they may not support, phonetic development in the language classroom is integral to the proficiencies of the students. Educators will need to find additional support materials in order to effectively satisfy both the suggestions from the Phonological Loop Model and the ACTFL 5 C’s.

**Implications for Further Research**

There are many more textbooks than the three that were analyzed here, and some that are newer too, so it is possible to expand on this research by examining more, and newer materials. Also, textbooks are not the only supplies used to support instruction. Research on how phonetics is developed in the classroom could be greatly furthered by studies that look at other commonly used instructional materials, such as workbooks and other teacher aids (websites or online tools, books and workbooks outside of that provided by the chosen publisher of the textbook, etc.), as well as what is actually happening in the classroom by observing classrooms. It would be beneficial to know how teachers are supporting phonetics in the classroom considering the wealth of audio materials available such as teacher websites or foreign language teacher forums, entire audio-based books around phonetics that are available on and off the Internet, online dictionaries that offer recordings of the word, etc.
Finally, phonetics has an important place in SLA, thus World Language education. In order to further the abilities of students, and research in language education, it is helpful to continue investigating how to support explicit phonetics instruction, as well as how it is, or is not, currently being supported.
References:


