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French Reading Comprehension Assessment Tool for Non-French Major Undergraduates in a Public University in China

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Abstract. This study aims to develop an educational assessment tool to assess the French reading comprehension ability of non-French major undergraduates at a public university in China. The assessment tool was developed based on Barrett's taxonomy to determine where the undergraduates are and where they should be in their French reading ability. A set of French reading comprehension descriptors was also designed to inform the specific reading ability for the different performance bands. A mixed-method approach was employed for data collection, utilising both quantitative and qualitative instruments. A total of 179 non-French-major undergraduates participated in a pilot study to provide data for calibrating the assessment tool. Subsequently, 183 participants were assessed for reading comprehension in French using the developed tool. The assessment results provided a clear picture of the participants' French reading comprehension and their performance in answering the different types of reading questions. In addition, eight participants selected from the different performance bands were interviewed to gather their feedback to identify areas of improvement for refining the assessment tool. The feedback included respondents' experiences and challenges faced during the test. The results from the study demonstrated that the developed assessment tool can benefit the non-French-major undergraduates in higher education as well as

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effectively provide teachers teaching French with the information that they need to know about the undergraduates French reading ability to prepare their teaching instruction.

Keywords: Barrett's Taxonomy, descriptors, education, educational assessment tool, French reading comprehension

1. Introduction

Many universities in China have established French language programmes for students of non-French major, collectively named "College French Programmes". *College French Syllabus* (College French Syllabus Revision Unit 2002) has been developed under the authority of the Chinese Ministry of Education to guide College French programmes teaching and learning activities. The *Syllabus* (2002) explicitly states that fostering students' French reading ability should be a priority, as reading is essential for acquiring knowledge of language, establishing a solid foundation for language learning, and obtaining information. However, it was regrettably observed that there are a few shortcomings in the assessment tools specifically designed to assess the French reading ability of students of College French (Chang, 2017). Consequently, teachers of College French programmes in China cannot gain a practical understanding of their students' French reading comprehension abilities. It is typical for teachers to gain an overview of their students' learning situation by conducting a final exam. However, the final exam results are presented in the form of a composite grade, which does not directly reflect the level of students' French reading comprehension ability. Mohamed et al. (2010) suggest that test scores should enable teachers to determine where students are in their reading development and can provide teachers with reliable analytical information about what students know and do not know, and what they can and cannot do, which ultimately help teachers to be more targeted in their reading comprehension instruction.

Furthermore, there is also another exam for students attending College French programme which is the College French Test of Level 4. According to the *Syllabus of College French Test of Level 4* (Reference?, 2012, this test, administered by the Chinese Ministry of Education, is a large-scale national standardised test held annually for undergraduates who have completed the appropriate level of College French programme. French reading is just a part of this test, and the final score report for this exam still does not reflect the student's practical French reading ability.

Taking into consideration the mismatch between the need for teachers to understand their students' French reading comprehension abilities and the fact

that there is a lack of French reading comprehension assessment tools, the researcher developed an assessment tool to evaluate the French reading abilities of non-French major undergraduates, undergoing the College French programme of a public university in China. This assessment tool was designed based on Barrett's taxonomy in combination with the *College French Syllabus* (College French Syllabus Revision Unit., 2002) and *Syllabus of College French Test of Level 4* (College French Exam Design Unit, 2023). This resulted in the development of a new French reading comprehension assessment tool that conformed to the requirements of the syllabus concerning the students' reading ability. Specifically, the tool utilised the different types of reading comprehension questions in Barrett's taxonomy to assess students' French reading comprehension ability.

This assessment tool provided teachers and students with information about French reading comprehension ability in concrete terms. To further strengthen the assessment tool a pilot study, was conducted by the researcher to test the validity and reliability of this assessment tool and the results were positive. The development and application of this assessment tool provide a new idea for the assessment of French reading comprehension ability for College French programme in Chinese universities.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Formative assessment

Formative assessment is regarded as an integral part of education, including teaching practice and student learning (Leenknecht et al., 2020). Boston (2002) indicates that formative assessment adapts teaching and learning to fulfil students' needs. When teachers or learners elicit, interpret, and use inferences about student learning to make decisions about the next stage of instruction that may be better or more founded than the decisions they would have made in the absence of the elicited evidence, the assessment is formative (Black & William, 2009).

Formative assessment allows teachers to supervise students' progress and motivates students to self-regulate their learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998). It also enables students to focus on tasks and learning objectives, making them aware of the gaps that exist between their desired learning objectives and their current knowledge (Brookhart et al., 2010). Martínez-Huamán et al. (2022) consider that it is necessary to strengthen integrated, continuous or formative assessment in the educational process since such assessment did not separate or isolate the stages of the teaching and learning process. In this study, it is reasonable to use formative assessments to assess participants' French reading comprehension as formative assessment can improve participants' reading performance (Yan & Chiu, 2023). Generally, it is considered a beneficial strategy to promote student learning and

achievement in various contexts, enhance students' active cognitive engagement, and promote students' understanding of what they are learning (Gikandi et al., 2011).

2.2 Barrett's taxonomy of Reading Comprehension

Barrett's taxonomy of the cognitive and affective dimensions of reading comprehension can help teachers develop reading comprehension questions for examining students' cognitive and affective reading comprehension levels (Krismadayanti & Zainil, 2021). Barrett's taxonomy is divided into five levels of comprehension such as literal comprehension, reorganisation comprehension, inferential comprehension, evaluative comprehension and appreciative comprehension (Göçer, 2014; Krismadayanti & Zainil, 2021; Aqeel et al., 2019).

Table 1 shows the results of a comparison between Barretts's Taxonomy with *College French Syllabus* (College French Syllabus Revision Unit., 2002) and the *Syllabus of College French Test of Level 4* (College French Exam Design Unit, 2023) From the comparison made, the researcher believed that incorporating Barrett's taxonomy could enhance formative assessment practices. Meanwhile, the researcher also decided that this French reading comprehension assessment tool would focus on the participants' performance in three aspects of Barrett's Taxonomy: Literal comprehension, Reorganisation and inferential comprehension.

Table 1. Sub-skills of Barrett's Taxonomy (2021) , Chinese College French Syllabus (2002) and Syllabus of College French Test of Level 4 (2012)

Barrett's Taxonomy (Cited in Wahyuni, 2021)	Chinese College French Syllabus (Second edition) (2002)	Syllabus of Chinese College French Test of Level 4 (2023)
Literal Comprehension Identify main facts, details, sequences, events, comparisons, cause and effect relationships and features that are explicitly stated in reading texts.	- Identify key facts; - Identify main idea of the text;	- Master the facts and details of the texts; - Understand the meaning of each sentence; - Grasp the main idea of the text;
Reorganisation Organise ideas or information from reading texts into explicit outlines.	- Draw a logical conclusion; - Draw reasonable judgements;	- Understand the facts and details of the text; - Understand and summarise the meaning of the whole text; - Make some judgements based on the texts.
Inferential Comprehension Infer main ideas, comparisons, supporting details, cause and effect based on context.	- Draw the correct inference; - Grasp the implicit messages in the text.	- Make certain inferences based on the texts.

3. Methodology

This study used mixed methods. Dawadi et al. (2021) suggested that mixing two methods is likely to be superior to a single method as it might provide rich insights into research phenomena that could not be completely understood with only qualitative or quantitative methods. In this study, the researcher gathered data for quantitative research from a pilot study and analysed it with IBM SPSS Statistics while the qualitative data for this research was primarily collected through interviews and processed using thematic analysis.

4. French Reading Comprehension Assessment Tool for Non-French Major Undergraduates

4.1 Development of French Reading Comprehension Assessment Tool

The researcher initially developed a French reading comprehension test which was subsequently followed by a pilot study to examine its reliability and validity. Based on the results of the pilot study, the researcher also developed a set of descriptors. For the main test, the researcher invited several non-French major undergraduates and used the assessment tool developed to evaluate their general performance and sub-skills in French reading. At last, the researcher conducted interviews with some participants to elicit their feedback, to refine the assessment tool. The procedure of this study was shown in Figure 1:

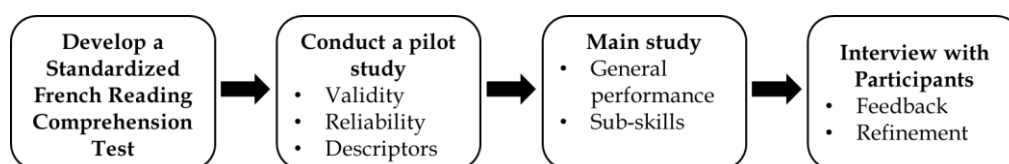


Figure 1. Procedure of Development of French Reading Comprehension Assessment

4.2 Developing French Reading Comprehension test

The French reading comprehension test consisted of three parts with 60 multiple-choice questions: Part A consisted of three texts, each text is followed by five questions, 15 questions in total in this section; Part B consisted of five texts, each text is followed by six questions, 30 questions in total in this section while Part C consists of two texts, the first text is followed by seven questions, and the second text is followed by eight questions, 15 questions in total for this section. The difficulty level of the test increased from Part A to Part C. The questions corresponding to each text comprised three types of questions from Barrett's taxonomy: literal comprehension, reorganisation and inferential comprehension. According to the requirement of *College French Syllabus* (College French Syllabus Revision Unit, 2002), students can successfully read and comprehend texts with familiar topics after completing College French programme. The *Syllabus of College French Test of Level 4* (Reference?, 2012) provided a more detailed set of guidelines regarding the topics, types, and difficulty levels of the texts included in the

reading section of the test. Accordingly, the length, topics and types of texts selected for this test were also referenced to the textbook used for the College French programme at the public university where this study was conducted. The contents of the French reading comprehension test of this study are shown in Table 2:

Table 2. Overview of Contents of French Reading Comprehension Test

		Topic of Text	Type of Text	Length of Text	No. of Questions	Total Marks (60)
Part A	Text 1	Biographies	descriptive	74 words	5	15
	Text 2	Daily life	descriptive	60 words	5	
	Text 3	Daily life	expository	82 words	5	
Part B	Text 4	Culture	descriptive	148 words	6	30
	Text 5	Daily life	expository	139 words	6	
	Text 6	Daily life	expository	114 words	6	
	Text 7	Biographies	narrative	128 words	6	
	Text 8	Culture	narrative	150 words	6	
Part C	Text 9	Education	argumentative	211 words	7	15
	Text 10	Society	argumentative	245 words	8	

4.3 Pilot Study

The researcher conducted a pilot study at a public university in China. 179 students who were non-French majors participated in the pilot study. The pilot study results enabled the researcher to obtain the validity and reliability of the test. The pilot study results revealed that the French reading comprehension assessment tool developed in this study could accurately assess students' performance in French reading comprehension and reflect their reading ability. Content validity was determined by expert judgement (Gay & Airasian, 2003). The researcher invited three experienced College French teachers as content experts to analyse the content validity of the French reading comprehension test in this study. The test's content validity parameters included text type, vocabulary, length, level of difficulty, and questions. The study results indicated that the test's content validity was high and the questions were considered appropriate. The researcher analysed the test results, i.e. scores of the participants in the pilot study to determine the construct validity of the prototype test. Since the prototype test was a multiple-choice test, it was decided that it would be more appropriate to use the Kuder-Richardson formula, specifically the KR20 formula, to determine the reliability of this test. This is because Oosterhof (2001) stated that the Kuder-Richardson method is more sensitive to sources of internal consistency. The researcher used the test results and applied the formula to find the KR-20. A score of 0.9324, which was highly reliable was obtained.

4.4 Score Band of French Reading Comprehension Test

The researcher used the Z-score to calculate the cut scores and determined four score bands to indicate the participants' French reading comprehension levels. Depending on the scores of the test, participants could be placed in four different bands: Band 1 indicated that the participant's French reading ability was excellent; Band 2 meant that the participant's French reading ability was satisfactory; Band 3 meant that the participant's French reading ability was good; and Band 4 represented the limited level of French reading ability. The cut scores and the Score Band are shown in Table 3:

Table 3. Cut Scores and Band of French Reading Comprehension Assessment

Bands	Cut scores	Level Terms
Band 1	42 - 60	Excellent
Band 2	29 - 41	Satisfactory
Band 3	16 - 28	Good
Band 4	0 - 15	Limited

4.5 Descriptors of French Reading Comprehension Assessment

Descriptors in assessment can help to develop more accurate test codes to describe what was tested and provide meaning to scores by judging performance and progress according to learning objectives (de Jong & Benigno, 2016). Participants' results in the pilot study were also used to develop the descriptors for this assessment tool. The descriptors were developed from the quantitative and qualitative data collected from the participants. The development of the descriptors in this assessment tool was also cross-referenced with Barrett's taxonomy to describe the participants' French reading comprehension sub-skills in the different bands in terms of three aspects: Literal comprehension, Reorganisation and inferential comprehension.

For literal comprehension, participants were assessed primarily on their ability in 'identifying supporting details' and main ideas'. Meanwhile, for reorganisation, participants were mainly assessed on their ability in 'classifying', 'summarising' and 'synthesising'. Finally, for inferential comprehension, participants were mainly assessed on their ability in 'making inferences' and 'interpreting figurative language'. The researcher analysed the percentage of participants who were able to answer each type of French reading comprehension question based on the results of the pilot study to understand how respondents at different levels performed when answering questions on different sub-skills. Different percentage values corresponded to different levels of participants' performance. Ultimately, the researcher developed descriptors for different levels of participants in each of the three sub-skill aspects of literal comprehension, reorganisation, and inferential comprehension.

4.6 Participants of Assessment

A total of 183 undergraduates from a public university in China were invited to participate in the French reading comprehension assessment. These students are all non-French majors and have undertaken the university's foreign language courses. Students are required to complete a total of three semesters of courses designated as "Second Foreign Language (French 1)," "Second Foreign Language (French 2)," and "Second Foreign Language (French 3)." Before evaluation, the 183 participants were divided into three groups of different level based on their placement in the aforementioned courses. The distribution of participants across these groups is illustrated in the Table 4:

Table 4. Distribution of Participants of French Reading Comprehension Assessment

Programme Name	Group Level	Number of Participants
Second Foreign Language (French 1)	Elementary	52
Second Foreign Language (French 2)	Intermediate	55
Second Foreign Language (French 3)	Advanced	76

4.7 Procedure of Assessment

The French reading comprehension test in this study is standardised, which meant that all participants were administered, scored and interpreted in the same way, regardless of time or place (Russell & Airasian, 2008). This French reading comprehension test lasts 60 minutes and is administered to the participants in three different level groups at the same time and place; after the test was completed, the researcher received the results of the participants' test, i.e. the scores; the researcher then analysed the results of the test and combined them with the descriptors developed in this study to obtain the final results of the participants' performance on the French reading comprehension assessment.

4.8 Interviews with participants

After completing the French reading test, the researcher randomly selected two participants from each band to be interviewed based on the results of the test. The interview questions were focused on the participants' performance on the French reading comprehension test and the application of French reading skills. Once the interviews had been conducted, the researcher proceeded to analyse the content through the thematic analysis method. This analysis enabled the researcher to obtain feedback from the participants on the French reading comprehension assessment to refine the descriptors of this study.

5. Findings

5.1 Participants' Performance in French Reading Comprehension Assessment

The researcher analysed the test results of the participants to assess and analyse their general performance and their performance in answering different types of questions.

- Participants` General Performance in Assessment

The results of the test indicated that the highest percentage of participants was located in Band 3, while the lowest percentage was located in Band 4. In particular, 183 participants were distributed as follows: 29.5% in Band 1, 30.1% in Band 2, 33.3% in Band 3, and 7.1% in Band 4. The data indicates that the majority of participants demonstrated an intermediate level of French reading comprehension ability. The result was shown in Figure 2.

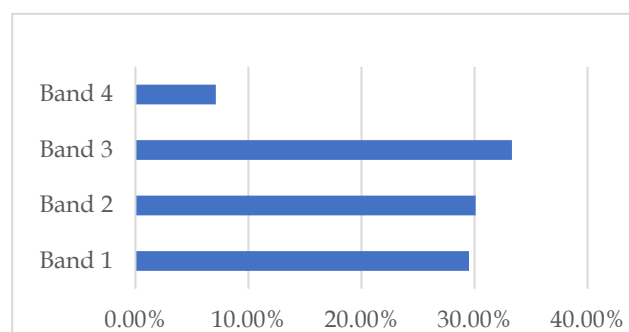


Figure 2. Percentage of Participants in Each Band

A statistical analysis of the test results according to the level of the French programme in which the participants were enrolled indicated that the participants at the elementary level were predominantly located at Bands 3 and 4, which indicated that their French reading comprehension ability was indeed weak. The participants at the intermediate level, on the other hand, were predominantly located at Bands 2 and 3, which indicated that their French reading comprehension ability was good. There was even a small number of participants who had excellent French reading ability and they were categorised under Band 1. As for the participants at the Advanced level, the majority were located in Band 1 and Band 2, indicating that they demonstrated excellent French reading comprehension ability. However, a small number of participants at the Advanced level were located in Band 3 and Band 4, indicating that they exhibited extremely weak French reading ability. The results were presented in Figure 3.

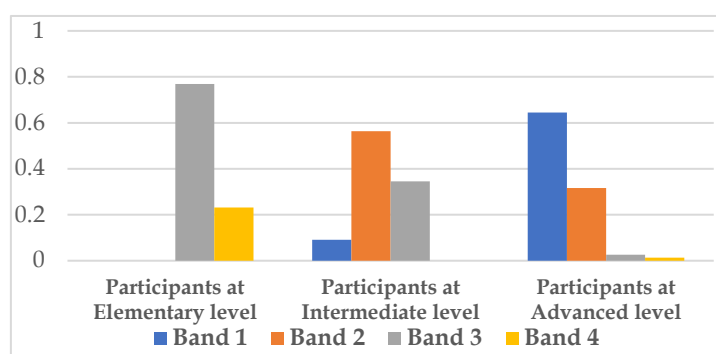


Figure 3. Distribution of participants at different levels in each Band

- Participants` performance in answering different types of questions

The results of the study indicated that participants at the Advanced level demonstrated a higher percentage of correct answers in general to the three different types of reading comprehension questions based on Barrett's taxonomy. However, when comparing participants at the same level, it was found that literal comprehension questions had the highest percentage of correct answers, followed by reorganisation comprehension questions, and finally, inferential comprehension questions, which had the lowest percentage of correct answers. This indicated that participants, regardless of their level of learning, were able to respond well to questions where the answer could be found directly in the text. In contrast, when it came to questions that required reorganisation of the content or inferences based on the text, the percentage of correct answers decreased in successive order. This result was demonstrated in Figure 4.

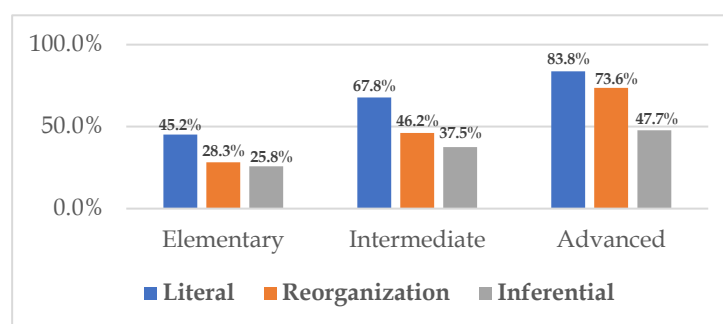


Figure 4. Percentage of Participants at Different Levels who correctly answered Literal Question, Reorganisation Question and Inferential Question

Based on the descriptors that have been developed, the performance of each participant in each sub-skill could be described. For instance, if a participant was in Band 1, their sub-skill "identifying supporting details" in literal of Elementary level could be described as "Can demonstrate excellent ability to find supporting detail. Find keywords directly from the text."

5.2 Participants` Feedback on French Reading Comprehension Assessment

The thematic analysis was conducted based on the contents of the interview to obtain participants` feedback on the French reading comprehension assessment. The results of the thematic analysis could be used for the refinement of the assessment. The interview codes are shown in Table 5:

Table 5. List of Codings for Interviews

Type of Data	Individuals	Time/Date
FOI – Formal interview Q1-Q8 – Interview questions	R – Researcher	Eg: 11/7/2023
	S1a&S1b – Student at Band 1	
	S2a&S2b – Student at Band 2	
	S3a&S3b – Student at Band 3	
	S4a&S4b – Student at Band 4	

Thematic analysis was seen as a skill set which was used to analyse textual data and make sense of themes (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). In this study, through thematic analyses, the researcher obtained feedback from participants on the following aspects:

- Comprehension of French reading test

The researcher's analysis of the participants' feedback indicated a direct correlation between the comprehension level of the content of this French reading test and the participants' test results. For instance, participants in Band 4 consistently reported difficulty comprehending both the text and the questions, whereas participants in Band 1 only encountered challenges with specific content and questions:

"I was able to understand most of the texts in the first two parts of the test, and I couldn't guarantee that I accurately understood the general idea of all the texts in the third part because the amount of vocabulary got larger." (S1a-Q1-12/7/2023)

"I could roughly understand the texts in Part A when I do the test and understood less of the texts in Part B and Part C." (S4a-Q1-12/7/2023)

"I could understand all of them." (S1b-Q2-13/7/2023)

"I could read and understand some of the vocabulary in the questions, but I didn't really understand the general idea of the questions." (S3b-Q2-11/7/2023)

The participants encountered some unknown words or expressions during the test that they did not understand. The majority of the participants chose to guess the meaning of these words or expressions. Furthermore, all of the aforementioned participants had a background in learning English, and they were able to relate French to English by guessing or deducing the meaning of the word or expression. In some instances, participants also provided responses based on the elimination of potential answers, considering the context of the entire text:

"I would probably make a guess, or an association, based on the content of the text in the first place. Firstly, I will see if the question is similar to the expression of the content in the text. Then I would also combine it with English; since I am an English major and have studied French for almost two semesters, I think that some French words and English words can still be associated or similar, which is very helpful for comprehension." (S1a-Q3-12/7/2023)

"I just took the keywords of the question and found the corresponding position in the text, and then I just matched the options with the position in the text, and used the elimination method to do the question." (S2b-Q3-11/7/2023)

"First of all, for words I didn't understand, I would look at the combination of letters to see if it was similar to the English I learnt in my major, so I could roughly guess the meaning of the French word in Chinese. For sentences, I would look for key information such as some obvious nouns in the text and make a guess."

For expressions, I would guess the general idea of the sentence based on the questions I answered earlier.” (S3b-Q3-11/7/2023)

“I mainly check if there are questions that have this expression associated with them. If the question had no relation to these parts, I would just give up if I didn't understand it, not wasting time on the test, and check again after the test; if there was a correlation, I would make a guess by observing the context, and if I really couldn't guess, I would look at the options and choose the answer based on my feelings.” (S4b-Q3-11/7/2023)

- Participants` performance in answering different types of French reading comprehension questions

The participants generally found the literal comprehension questions in this French reading comprehension test the easiest to answer, while the Reorganisation and inferential comprehension questions were perceived as relatively difficult. This was attributed to a lack of vocabulary and the necessity of higher-order thinking skills to answer these types of questions:

“Yes, I think this type of question was the easiest to answer because we could go back to the original text and find the answers directly from the relevant vocabulary in the questions.” (S1a-Q5-12/7/2023)

“If the information is clearly in the text, I can usually do it. But if the question is vague and the options are similar and confusing, sometimes I can't always do it.” (S4b-Q5-11/7/2023)

“It's relatively difficult and requires some thinking in relation to the text to pick out the answer.” (S2b-Q6-11/7/2023)

“No. Because of a lack of vocabulary, I could not understand the question or the options well enough, so I had to guess.” (S3b-Q6-11/7/2023)

With regard to literal comprehension questions, the majority of the respondents could answer with the skill of "find keyword"; for questions in which the answers could not be found directly in the texts, the Advanced level respondents indicated that they were able to use some reading skills to answer the corresponding types of questions during the test, for example, to answer reorganisation comprehension questions, the respondents at Band 2 indicated that they could find the answer by "reorganising the elements"; to answer inferential comprehension questions, the respondents at Band 1 indicated that they could "make inferences" based on the text:

“I can answer the relatively simpler questions of this type. It can be directly applied to some of the techniques we use when doing English reading, for example, in Part B, Question 16, you can catch the keyword "la Fête de la Musique", then look for the position in the article where the word appears and then analyse the

context, and find the word related to it " le Ministère de la Culture de la France", and then choose option B." (S3b-Q5-11/7/2023)

"I can answer most of them, not all. The answers cannot be obtained directly from the text and require some reorganising and restructuring of the information obtained. Question 21 then requires making inferences based on the text." (S2a-Q6-12/7/2023)

The respondents in Band 3 and Band 4, could only guess the correct answer when answering the more difficult questions of reorganisation comprehension and inferential comprehension:

"Most of these types of questions, I cannot answer. However, if I understood the main idea of the whole text, I would still be able to get the correct answer based on the central theme of the text. But for Question 21, this kind of question that I could not find any relevant information in the text at all, I could only guess the answer." (S4a-Q6-12/7/2023)

The results of the respondents' feedback could be employed to refine the descriptors used in this study, thereby complementing the participants' general performance in each Band. Additionally, the experience of answering different types of questions and the skills employed could be incorporated as crucial elements within the descriptors.

6. Discussion

In this study, the researcher developed a French reading comprehension assessment to evaluate the French reading ability of non-French major undergraduates in a public university in China. This assessment tool was developed based on the Chinese College French Syllabus, incorporating Barrett's taxonomy. It enabled this French reading comprehension assessment tool to meet the requirements of the College French Syllabus and also to assess the detailed level of the participants' French reading comprehension and their ability to use the sub-skills. The results of the study demonstrated that participants with higher levels of French language proficiency also had relatively higher levels of French reading comprehension. This result can be drawn from the participants' test results, i.e. their scores. On the other hand, the analysis of the interviews also showed that the higher the level of French language learning, the better the respondents' performance in the French reading comprehension test. This is because the reader's language proficiency plays an important role in understanding the text (Kendik-Gut, 2019). Participants at the same level of French learning differed in their French reading comprehension performance when compared to one another. This finding is consistent with previous research indicating that, despite having the same level of education, students may differ in

their reading abilities (Lin et al., 2016). Therefore, this assessment tool enables College French instructors to ascertain their students' current level of French reading comprehension.

By analysing the scores of participants with different levels of French learning on a French reading comprehension test, as well as analysing and interpreting the responses of the respondents in the interviews, the researcher found that the assessment tool also evaluated participants' performance in answering questions of varying types. Overall, participants performed better in answering literal comprehension questions, and less well in answering Reorganisation and inferential comprehension questions. This was particularly the case for participants with lower reading levels, specifically those in Band 3 and Band 4. This finding is consistent with the results of Purnamasari and Trisno (2022), in which they found that students demonstrated difficulties in answering main idea and generative inference questions.

The French reading descriptors in this study accurately described what participants at different bands could and could not do. This finding was in accord with the study of Mohamed et al. (2010), which indicated that the descriptors were primarily used to describe a participant's reading performance and to provide teachers and other relevant stakeholders with a holistic picture of what a participant could or could not do at a certain level. Hence, the assessment tool employed in this study will enable College French teachers to ascertain whether their students are able to utilise diverse reading skills to respond to various types of questions.

6.1 Implications and Limitations

The French reading comprehension assessment tool developed in this study can serve as a benchmark for curriculum developers to align teaching materials with the reading proficiency levels of non-French major undergraduates. It provides a clear framework for what students should know and be able to do at various stages of their language learning. In addition, the distinct bands and descriptors allow educators to tailor their instructional strategies to address specific areas of weakness. For instance, focusing on vocabulary enhancement and cultural nuances to improve inferential comprehension. As a formative assessment tool, it enables continuous monitoring of students' progress, allowing for timely intervention and personalised feedback, thus fostering a more student-centred learning environment. For the students, they can use the results for self-assessment, setting individual learning goals and taking initiative in their French language learning process.

While this study makes a valuable contribution to the field, it has several limitations. The study was conducted with a specific group of non-French major undergraduates from a single public university in China. The findings may not be generalisable to other populations with different socio-cultural backgrounds or educational systems. Secondly, the texts used in the assessment were chosen based on the curriculum of the university where this study was conducted. As a result, the texts may not represent the breadth of texts that students encounter in their whole French learning process.

6.2 Recommendations

The French reading comprehension assessment tool developed in this study allowed teachers to understand participants' performance in answering the three types of questions, i.e., literal comprehension question, reorganisation question, and inferential comprehension question. It is suggested that reading skills training can also be integrated into the College French programme. The responses to questions requiring literal comprehension can be found directly in the text, and they have basic requirements in terms of students' vocabulary and grammar. Consequently, it is necessary to strengthen students' learning of basic French language knowledge in teaching activities. Reorganisation comprehension questions require students to summarise and reorganise the content of the text based on their understanding of the content of the text. It is, therefore, possible to strengthen the training of students' overall reading comprehension skills in the class. Concerning inferential comprehension questions, students are usually required to make reasonable inferences based on understanding the text. These inferences often rely on some additional cultural background knowledge, and it is recommended that College French teachers consider adding some French socio-cultural knowledge to their teaching activities.

Future research could build upon the foundation laid by this study. Researchers could conduct a study with a more diverse group of participants, including different age groups, educational backgrounds, and cultural settings, to enhance the generalisability of the findings. A wider variety of text types and topics could be introduced in the assessment to capture a more comprehensive range of reading comprehension skills. Furthermore, researchers could develop a holistic assessment tool that evaluates reading and other language skills such as listening, speaking, and writing.

7. Conclusion

The researchers developed a new French reading comprehension assessment tool for undergraduate students of non-French majors at a public university in China. The assessment tool can be used to assess participants' general French reading performance. It was also able to effectively assess the three French reading sub-

skills of the participants, namely literal comprehension, reorganisation and inferential comprehension. This assessment tool was a formative assessment which can guide the teaching and learning activities. The assessment results enabled French teachers to gain a clear understanding of their students' French reading abilities, providing valuable information that can be used as a reference for the design of subsequent teaching activities. This allowed teachers to adopt different teaching methods with different focuses for different levels of students, thus improving their French reading levels and enabling them to complete the teaching tasks more effectively. For students, the assessment provided an understanding of their level of French reading ability, enabling them to identify areas for improvement and take the initiative to address them during the subsequent learning process. In summary, the French reading assessment tool developed in this study offered insights that can inform future research in this field.

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