

Readability Indices: Tools for Improving Educational Quality

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Questions

- 1. Are passages from the lower level textbooks easier for pupils to read than passages from the higher level textbooks?**
- 2. Using an internationally validated readability index (LIX¹), are reading passages in Ghanaian textbooks sequenced such that easier passages precede more difficult passages?**
- 3. Is the readability index (LIX) a useful predictor of pupil reading performance?**

¹ Anderson, J. (1983). Lix and Rix: Variations on a little known readability index. Journal of Reading, 26, 490-496.

1. Are passages from the lower level textbooks easier for pupils to read than passages from the higher level textbooks?

Good News:

*** It is very rare for lower level passages to be significantly harder than upper level passages.**

*** One exception is that in the intensive schools in the upper grade levels children performed significantly better on their own level text than on the texts from prior years.**

Not So Good News:

***With the exception of the level 2 passage, differences between passages from levels 3-6 were not significant. Suggests that pupils did not find lower level passages to be substantially easier than upper level passages.**

2. Using an internationally validated readability index (LIX), are reading passages in Ghanaian textbooks sequenced such that easier passages precede more difficult passages?

*** Within each grade level, there is considerable variability in difficulty levels as determined by LIX.**

*** For texts 3-5, differences in LIX readability between the grade levels were not significant.**

*** Passages from level 2 text were significantly easier (based on LIX) than passages from other levels.**

*** Passages from level 6 text were significantly harder (based on LIX) than passages from other levels.**

3. Is the readability index (LIX) a useful predictor of pupil reading performance?

*** Using Baseline Only: No significant correlations between LIX and pupil performance measures (decoding & reading comprehension)**

*** Using Aug. 95 Data: Significant negative correlations between LIX and actual reading performance:**

| | Intensive | Non-Inten. | Combined |
|------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
| 6th grade | | | |
| % words correct | -.89* | -.80 | -.92* |
| % comprehension | -.84* | -.86* | -.87* |
| 5th grade | | | |
| % words correct | -.62 | -.37 | -.80 |
| % comprehension | -.99** | -.99** | -.93* |

* $p \leq 0.05$

** $p \leq 0.01$

Implications

- 1. When children are learning English as a foreign language, recency of exposure to the vocabulary may be as strong a predictor of reading performance as readability indices.**
- 2. LIX as a readability index may not be as useful when children are first learning English and to read in English. More research is needed-- perhaps looking more closely at the words the children are getting correct.**
- 3. Once literacy skills are stronger, LIX appears to be a strong indicator of readability. This is useful for reviewing existing and new materials.**
- 4. Implications for practice: Guidelines for teachers may help them use the texts better.**
- 5. Implications for national efforts: Informing curriculum development and teacher training.**
- 6. Implications for Knowledge Building-- Readability indices may work differently for pupils who are learning English as a foreign language.**

Interview Findings

Overall:

=> When adults help with school work, it is a father or uncle.
When siblings help with school work, it is a sister.

=> Teacher interviews corroborated differences noted based on classroom/pupil observations. Focus in Gender Unequal schools on choralizing ("for pronunciation") and use of visual aids. Focus in Gender Equal schools on teacher modeling, labeling to build vocabulary, and use of textbooks.

Non-Intensive Schools:

? => Slight tendency for parents of children from Gender Equal school to favor boys education, whereas parents of children from Gender Unequal school expressed less favoritism.

=> Slightly more support for education in Gender Equal school than Gender Unequal school (e.g., 2 parents in gender unequal school reported no homework but didn't follow up.)

Intensive Schools:

=> Although parents from both schools favored boys education, slightly less favoritism was noted in the interview with parents from Gender Equal school.

=> Parents slightly less in Gender Unequal school (but this was not corroborated in the pupil interviews)

=> Both intensive schools reported active community involvement due to IEQ.

Implications

*Enrollment
Experiences
Achievements*

1. Community support for schooling makes a difference--both of the Gender Equal schools had parent and community support. (Community support isn't sufficient--one Gender Unequal school had parent and community support as well.)

*gap ix
disparity
grew over
18 mos.*

2. Classrooms in Gender Equal schools are different from classrooms in Gender Unequal schools.

- Gender Unequal classrooms are more interactive.
- Gender Unequal classrooms have more off-task behavior during choraling of English
- Criticism for wrong answers is used more often by teachers from Gender Unequal schools

3. Instructional organization is different.

- Gender Unequal schools use more visual aids and choraling of English for pronunciation.
- Gender Equal schools focus more on teachers speaking and modeling English, using textbooks and labels.

4. Children in Gender Equal schools are performing better on performance measures than pupils from Gender Unequal schools. As yet unclear is which happened first or if this is true of other Gender Equal schools.

*More boys
transfer &
dropout*

5. In both Gender Equal and Unequal schools, when pupils and parents were asked who helped with school work, sisters were mentioned more often than brothers. (Educating girls educates a household...)

6. Future efforts to increase participation by girls will need to recognize the factors that make schooling for girls more attractive to parents and girls--including classroom experience and instructional style-- and then tailor the interventions to local conditions.