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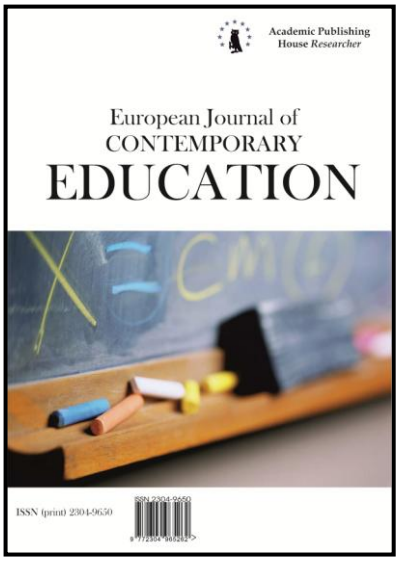

A Tool Called Communicative Curve Applied for Evaluation of Similarities and Differences between Foreign Language Textbooks

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Abstract

In the study, the following research questions are responded: Are there any conception differences within the textbook series? How might the conception influence teaching French? The current study presents the results with implications for teachers of French at secondary schools. It points out some significant markers such as the preference of textbook type activities and arguments for choosing the textbooks.

Keywords: teaching, French as a foreign language, textbooks, activities, similarities, conception, disadvantages.

1. Introduction

The Slovak state language policy and curricula are becoming increasingly important not only in the implementation of instruction but also in the selection of textbooks. Partial results from the empirical research conducted during three years and a survey of textbooks used for teaching French at secondary schools in Slovakia are presented. The research objective is not only to show what types of textbooks are used but to demonstrate that they are often not sufficiently developed in methodology. The methodology should reflect the learners` needs and accommodate the tasks according to the language and communication levels. And this is the objective of the present study: to demonstrate what is the proportion between language-oriented activities and communication-oriented activities, whether the textbooks are conceived similarly or differently and in what perspective they should be conceived differently.

2. Literature Review

Several theories have influenced the research of textbooks so far: Cunningsworth (1995), Besse (1995), Courtillon (2003), Pécheur and Vigner (1995), Repka (1990), Turek (1997), Brumfit

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and Johnson (1989), Dalgalian, Lieutaud and Weiss (1991), Daoud and Celce-Murcia (1979), Lamie (1999), Lee and Vanpatten (2005), Nunan (1989, 1991), Skierso (1991), Thornbury (2006) or Tomlinson (2001), Lojova (2017). Birova (2009, 2016) created the Theory of Communication Curve analysis reflecting the material coverage of everyday class in the form of the proportion between language-based and communication-based activities in the textbooks based on the theory of a balanced approach (Harmer, 1991).

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Objectives

The primary research objective is to find out whether the typology of activities in the textbooks within one series is similar. The null hypothesis (H_o): "The means of the sets of data are equal" is verified for each textbook series.

3.2. Sample

The following series of textbooks were evaluated:
Panorama 1 and 2
En français 1, 2, 3 and 4
Libre Échange 1 and 2
Café crème 1 and 2
Forum 1 and 2
Espaces 1 and 2
Francúzsky jazyk pre stredné školy 1, 2, 3 and 4
Le nouveau sans frontières 1 and 2

One randomly chosen unit from each textbook was analyzed and compared to the unit chosen from the other textbook/s within the series.

3.3. Methods

The content analysis was invented by the author (Birova, 2009, 2016) and applied to evaluate textbooks used for teaching French as a foreign language from the communicative and language point of view.

3.4. Procedure

The statistical significance (t-test) in Excel was used to answer the hypothesis. A statistically significant t-test result is one in which a difference between two groups is unlikely to have occurred because the sample happened to be atypical. Statistical significance is determined by the size of the difference between the group averages, the sample size, and the standard deviations of the groups. For practical purposes, the statistical significance suggests that the books from which we sample are different or similar. The t-test's statistical significance indicates whether or not the difference between two groups' averages most likely reflects a "real" difference in the chosen units of textbooks from which the groups were sampled. The t-test's effect size complements its statistical significance, describing the magnitude of the difference, whether or not the difference is statistically significant.

The statistical method of ANOVA (analysis of variance) in Excel was used in order to determine whether the means of the groups were different. ANOVA uses F-tests to statistically test the equality of means, it is a ratio of two variances (a measure of dispersion, or how far the data are scattered from the mean). In this post, it will be shown how variances provide information about the means. Larger values represent greater dispersion. Variance is the square of the standard deviation. Standard deviations are easier to understand than variances because they are in the same units as the data rather than squared units. However, many analyses actually use variances in the calculations.

The evaluation procedure was carried out as follows. All activities were evaluated from randomly selected lessons. Activities were assigned to seven points of the communication curve. Seven points determine the degree of communication on a Communication curve. The first point indicates that the activity is language-oriented, linguistically closed, and the learner does not communicate, only practice the grammatical, phonetical, lexical or orthographic matters. The second point indicates that the activity is closed, with a closed response. The learner practices a chosen sociolinguistic or socio-cultural aspect. The third point is associated with linguistically closed activities, in which learners practice pragmatic contents such as speech acts, mini-dialogues, the language in restricted communication. To the fourth point of the curve, we include activities

that are contextually closed or semi-closed. The contextual role consists of training receptive skills, not productive ones. So, most often, at this point, it goes on reading or listening comprehension activities. The fifth point represents the tasks in which the learner works with a context in which sociolinguistic or socio-cultural aspects and intercultural communication are practiced. In the 6th point of the curve, it is typical to work with micro-contexts, speech acts. The 7th point of the curve is considered to be the point where learners focus on communication, writing, continuous production (monologue) and oral interaction.

Determining the degrees of communicability in individual tasks was the pre-research phase of comparing textbook series. The aim was to find out whether textbooks which follow on have a diverse range of tasks within the ranks of the different grades and levels of the series of textbooks that were measured. If the statistical test reveals that textbooks are similar, it means that textbooks at a higher linguistic and cognitive level do not require more communication from the learner and are not conceived progressively. On the other hand, if statistics prove that they are different, they predetermine the communication continuum and progress.

4. Results

Panorama 1 and 2 textbooks

F-Test Two-Sample for Variances

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	4,055555556	3,818182
Variance	6,408496732	5,298701
Observations	18	22
df	17	21
F	1,209446687	
P(F<=f) one-tail	0,33574712	
F Critical one-tail	2,138872329	

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	4,055555556	3,818182
Variance	6,408496732	5,298701
Observations	18	22
Pooled Variance	5,795188729	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	38	
t Stat	0,310253345	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0,379031787	
t Critical one-tail	1,685954461	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0,758063574	
t Critical two-tail	2,024394147	

Fig. 1. Variance of Panorama 1 and 2 textbooks

First, the *F*-test proved that two sets of data compared have equal variance ($F = 1.209 < F_{crit} = 2.138$). The two-sample *t*-test of unequal sample size ($n_1 = 18$, $n_2 = 22$) and assuming equal variances was used to determine if the two sets of data are significantly different from each other. The *t*-value (0.310) and the degrees of freedom for the total sample size were determined ($df = 38$), so the *p*-value could be found. The calculated *p*-value (0.758) is above the statistical significance ($\alpha = 0.05$), so H_o is proved – the variances are identical which means that the textbooks are conceived similarly.

En français 1, 2, 3, 4 textbooks

Anova: Single Factor

SUMMARY

Goups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Column 1	28	52	1,857142857	3,904761905
Column 2	39	120	3,076923077	6,862348178
Column 3	25	70	2,8	6
Column 4	40	176	4,4	4,194871795

ANOVA

Source of Variance	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Group	112,5355311	3	37,51184371	7,126048763	0,000183	2,675387
Within Group	673,7978022	128	5,26404533			
Total	786,3333333	131				

Fig. 2. Variance of En français 1, 2, 3 and 4 textbooks

The Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test if the means of more than two groups are equal. This was the case of a single factor, unbalanced data, and fully randomized experiment. The groups were summarized by the number of experimental units (n_1 = 28, n_2 = 39, n_3 = 25, n_4 = 40), sums, means and variance. The between-group sum of squared differences (*SS* = 112.535), the degrees of freedom (*df* = 3) and mean square value (*MS* = 37.511) were calculated. Then the within-group sum of squares (*SS* = 673.797), the degrees of freedom (*df* = 128) and the mean square value (*MS* = 5.264) were calculated. Since the $F = 7.126 > F_{crit}$ (2.675) at $\alpha = 0.05$ the values in groups differ. This means that the textbooks are conceived differently, and H_o is rejected.

Libre Échange 1 and 2 textbooks

F-Test Two-Sample for Variances

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	4,371428571	3,3
Variance	4,357983193	4,326316
Observations	35	20
df	34	19
F	1,007319716	
P(F<=f) one-tail	0,508220957	
F Critical one-tail	2,050356537	

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	4,371428571	3,3
Variance	4,357983193	4,326316
Observations	35	20
Pooled Variance	4,346630728	
Hypothesized Mean	0	

Difference		
df	53	
t Stat	1,833388596	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0,036181574	
t Critical one-tail	1,674116237	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0,072363148	
t Critical two-tail	2,005745949	

Fig. 2. Variance of En français 1, 2, 3 and 4 textbooks

First, the *F*-test proved that two sets of data compared have equal variance ($F = 1.007 < F_{crit} = 2.050$). The two-sample *t*-test of unequal sample size ($n_1 = 35$, $n_2 = 20$) and assuming equal variances was used to determine if the two sets of data are significantly different from each other. The *t*-value (1.833) and the degrees of freedom for the total sample size were determined ($df = 53$), so the *p*-value could be found. The calculated *p*-value (0.072) is above the statistical significance ($\alpha = 0.05$), so H_o is proved – the variances are identical which means that the textbooks are conceived similarly.

Café crème 1 and 2 textbooks

F-Test Two-Sample for Variances

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	3,5	4,317073
Variance	5,431034483	4,071951
Observations	30	41
df	29	40
F	1,333767079	
P(F<=f) one-tail	0,197030675	
F Critical one-tail	1,751294109	

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	3,5	4,317073
Variance	5,431034483	4,071951
Observations	30	41
Pooled Variance	4,643160127	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	69	
t Stat	-1,578256189	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0,059540335	
t Critical one-tail	1,667238549	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0,119080671	
t Critical two-tail	1,99494539	

Fig. 2. Variance of En français 1, 2, 3 and 4 textbooks

First, the *F*-test proved that two sets of data compared have equal variance ($F = 1.333 < F_{crit} = 1.751$). The two-sample *t*-test of unequal sample size ($n_1 = 30$, $n_2 = 41$) and assuming equal variances was used to determine if the two sets of data are significantly different from each other. The *t*-value (-1.578) and the degrees of freedom for the total sample size were determined ($df = 69$), so the *p*-value could be found. The calculated *p*-value (0.119) is above the statistical significance

(α = 0.05), so H_o is proved – the variances are identical which means that the textbooks are conceived similarly.

Forum 1 and 2 textbooks

F-Test Two-Sample for Variances

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	3,790323	4,344262
Variance	4,561872	5,796175
Observations	62	61
df	61	60
F	0,787049	
P(F<=f) one-tail	0,176874	
F Critical one-tail	0,653206	

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	4,344262	3,790323
Variance	5,796175	4,561872
Observations	61	62
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	119	
t Stat	1,349076	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0,089937	
t Critical one-tail	1,657759	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0,179874	
t Critical two-tail	1,9801	

Fig. 5. Variance of Forum 1 and 2 textbooks

First, the *F*-test proved that two sets of data compared have unequal variance (F = 0.787 > F_{crit} = 0.653). The two-sample *t*-test of unequal sample size (n_1 = 61, n_2 = 62) and assuming unequal variances was used to determine if the two sets of data are significantly different from each other. The *t*-value (1.349) and the degrees of freedom for the total sample size were determined (df = 119), so the *p*-value could be found. The calculated *p*-value (0.179) is above the statistical significance (α = 0.05), so H_o is proved – the variances are identical which means that the textbooks are conceived similarly.

Espaces 1 and 2 textbooks

F-Test Two-Sample for Variances

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	4,568181818	3,117647
Variance	5,506871036	5,561497
Observations	44	34
df	43	33
F	0,990177773	
P(F<=f) one-tail	0,482302112	
F Critical one-tail	0,586225517	

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	3,117647059	4,568182
Variance	5,561497326	5,506871
Observations	34	44
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	71	
t Stat	-2,699494691	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0,004336912	
t Critical one-tail	1,666599659	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0,008673824	
t Critical two-tail	1,993943341	

Fig. 6. Variance of Espaces 1 and 2 textbooks

First, the *F*-test proved that two sets of data compared have unequal variance (F = 0.990 > F_{crit} = 0.586). The two-sample *t*-test of unequal sample size (n_1 = 34, n_2 = 44) and assuming unequal variances was used to determine if the two sets of data are significantly different from each other. The *t*-value (-2.699) and the degrees of freedom for the total sample size were determined (df = 71), so the *p*-value could be found. The calculated *p*-value (0.008) is below the statistical significance (α = 0.05), so H_o is rejected – the variances are not identical which means that the textbooks are conceived differently.

Francúzsky jazyk pre stredné školy 1, 2, 3, 4 textbooks

Anova: Single Factor

SUMMARY

Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Column 1	29	51	1,75862069	3,189655172
Column 2	16	32	2	3,466666667
Column 3	13	71	5,461538462	1,602564103
Column 4	1	0	0	#DIV/0!

ANOVA

Source of Variance	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Group	139,4927842	3	46,49759475	15,92967463	1,41783E-07	2,772537
Within Group	160,5411141	55	2,918929347			
Total	300,0338983	58				

Fig. 7. Variance of Francúzsky jazyk pre stredné školy 1, 2, 3 and 4 textbooks

The Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test if the means of more than two groups are equal. This was the case of a single factor, unbalanced data, and fully randomized experiment. The groups were summarized by the number of experimental units (n_1 = 29, n_2 = 16, n_3 = 13, n_4 = 1), sums, means and variance. The between-group sum of squared differences (SS = 139.492), the degrees of freedom (df = 3) and mean square value (MS = 46.497) were calculated. Then the within-group sum of squares (SS = 160.541), the degrees of freedom (df = 55) and the mean square value (MS = 2.918) were calculated. Since the F = 15.929 > F_{crit} (2.775) at α = 0.05 the values in groups differ. This means that the textbooks are conceived differently, and H_o is rejected.

Le nouveau sans frontières 1 and 2 textbooks

F-test Two-Sample for Variances

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	3	2
Variance	6,6	3,52381
Observations	31	22
df	30	21
F	1,872972973	
P(F<=f) one-tail	0,069253432	
F Critical one-tail	2,0102483	

t-Test: Two-Sample Assumineg Unequal Variances

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	3	2
Variance	6,6	3,52381
Observations	31	22
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	51	
t Stat	1,637197676	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0,053872866	
t Critical one-tail	1,675284951	
P(T<=t) two tail	0,107745731	
t Critical two-tail	2,007583728	

Fig. 8. Variance of Le nouveau sans frontières 1 and 2 textbooks

First, the *F*-test proved that two sets of data compared have equal variance ($F = 1.872 < F_{crit} = 2.010$). The two-sample *t*-test of unequal sample size ($n_1 = 31$, $n_2 = 22$) and assuming equal variances was used to determine if the two sets of data are significantly different from each other. The *t*-value (1.637) and the degrees of freedom for the total sample size were determined ($df = 51$), so the *p*-value could be found. The calculated *p*-value (0.107) is above the statistical significance ($\alpha = 0.05$), so H_o is proved – the variances are identical which means that the textbooks are conceived similarly.

5. Discussion

In the study, the research questions were responded:
- conception differences within the textbook series,
- the influence of conception on teaching French.

Series of textbooks for teaching French	*H_o proved*	*H_o rejected*
Panorama 1 and 2	x	
En français 1, 2, 3, 4		x
Libre échange 1 and 2	x	
Café crème 1 and 2	x	
Forum 1 and 2	x	
Espaces 1 and 2		x
Francúzsky jazyk pre stredné školy 1, 2, 3, 4		x
Le nouveau sans frontières 1 and 2	x	
Discussed conclusions	*5 series of textbooks are conceived similarly.*	*3 series of textbooks are conceived differently.*

6. Conclusions

The current study presented the results with implications for teachers of French at secondary schools. It pointed out some significant markers such as preferences for activities in French textbooks and arguments for choosing the textbooks. The content analysis of the series of textbooks proved that only three series of textbooks are conceived differently from the point of view of the typology of activities. Five series of textbooks are conceived similarly which means that the textbooks do not offer a learner the communicative progress. *Libre échange* textbooks are conceived communicatively from the beginning (0 level), vice versa, *Francúzsky jazyk pre stredné školy* follows the techniques of the audio-lingual method and is conceived differently, but three levels focus much on practicing linguistics means. *En français* textbooks is conceived differently and shows a good proportion of activities. Nevertheless, it shows no authentic reading materials. *Espaces* are conceived well, yet, published 20 years ago, the textbook is not in mode any more.

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