# An analysis of a French as a Foreign Language Corpus for Readability Assessment

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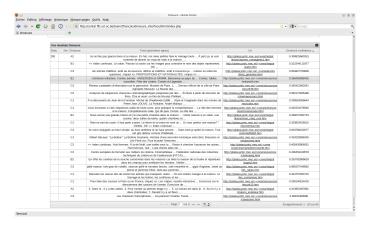
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### Context

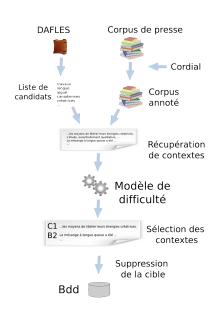
#### Readability models have roles to play in iCALL:

Find educational material of a given level, on the web



#### Context

Enhance systems for automatic exercise generation (proposal based on ALFALEX) [Verlinde et al., 2003]



## **Problematic**

- Many formulas "available" for L1, especially for English
  [Collins-Thompson and Callan, 2005, Feng et al., 2010, Vajjala and Meurers, 2012]
- Limited amount of models "available" for L2 [Heilman et al., 2007, Schwarm and Ostendorf, 2005]
- AND only two formulas use the CEFR scale (current standard) [François and Fairon, 2012, Pilán et al., 2014]
- Problem: Large amount of efforts required to collect the annotated data to train a readability model!

# Objectives of the paper

- Gathering a corpus of texts annotated for difficulty, as large as possible
  - Critical review of 5 common annotation approaches in readability
  - We opt for the extraction of texts from textbook series (with some conditions) and giving the textbook level to all texts extracted from it.
  - We report the collect process of about 2,000 texts for French as a Foreign Language (FFL)
- Investigate the shortcomings of this criterion (which is mainstream in the field)
  - Produce unbalanced corpus
  - Homogeneity of annotations across textbook series is questionable

# 2 experiments

#### Class imbalanced effect

- We compared the results of models either based on a balanced or an unbalanced corpus
- The ordinal logistic models used includes two well-acknowledged features (mean number of words/sentence and of letters/word)
- It confirmed that majority class may deform the prediction space

## Homogeneity of the annotations

- We compared the lexical and syntactic difficulty of textbook series among them (for each levels)
- We used ANOVA and MANOVA and noticed significant homogeneity issues in the corpus
- A relation between the type of pedagogical approach and homogeneity issues also appeared.

Take-home message: Test the homogeneity of annotations when using texts from educational sources (just as we would do for human annotators).

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