The explicit teaching of reading comprehension strategies in foreign language secondary-school classes

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

The reader has to be informed that some abbreviations have been used in the writing of the present dissertation. Those are presented hereunder along with what they stand for:

CAF	Centre d'Autoformation et de Formation Continuée
CECAFOC	Formations de l'enseignement catholique
CEFR	*Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*
CPEONS	Conseil des Pouvoirs organisateurs de l'Enseignement Officiel Neutre Subventionné
FELSI	Fédération des établissements libres subventionnés indépendants
FESeC	Fédération de l'enseignement secondaire catholique
FL	foreign language
IFC	Institut de la Formation en Cours de Carrière
LM1	langue moderne 1
LM2	langue moderne 2
LM3	langue moderne 3
Ph.D.	doctor of philosophy
RC	reading comprehension
RCS	reading comprehension strategy
SEGEC	Secrétariat général de l'enseignement catholique
UAA	Unité d'Acquis d'Apprentissage
WBE	Wallonie Bruxelles Enseignement
WBF	Wallonia Brussels Federation

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1 INTRODUCTION:

In 2018, on the occasion of the 7th edition of the PISA international survey carried out by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD),[1] the major domain tested was reading, i.e. students were asked to interpret texts in their first language using their knowledge and reasoning skills. The results of this study for the Wallonia Brussels Federation (WBF) confirmed a decline in reading performance already observed in 2015. Even though children learn to read in a foreign language (FL) at school in a different way than they learn in their native language, there is an interdependence between the assimilation of the two languages (Alderson, 2005; Anderson, 1999; Barnett, 1988). The conscious and intentional assimilation of the former is obviously based on a certain level of development of the latter. One could therefore assume a similar decline on FL reading levels.

At a time when results in reading are thus reflecting poorer skills, this MA thesis is convinced of the possibility that working on teaching practices can remedy the situation. Indeed, research mentions that reading at school focuses mainly on the verification of comprehension (Alderson, 2005). Although this verification remains essential to evaluate students' level of comprehension, the learning of reading comprehension strategies (RCS) is nonetheless necessary to help students understand a message written in a FL (Alderson, 2005; Simons & Beckers, 1999). It is for this reason that this dissertation focuses more specifically on the explicit teaching of RCS and the role such teaching can play in improving secondary-school students' FL reading skills.

The idea for this topic came to me during my training in didactics at the university of Liège. The strategic dimension was discussed at length during my master program. However, I was not familiar with them as I do not remember working on RCS when I was a secondary-school student myself. I have wondered about possible didactic changes since I left high school and have therefore been curious about the subject. After this research, I can now say with certainty that explicit teaching of RCS not only helps secondary-school students understand FL texts better, by giving them the opportunity to acquire better reading skills, but also prepares them for the reading of academic FL texts like those they are going to be confronted with in their further education. Thus, in order to align their teaching with the 1997 Mission Decree in Belgium, whereby teaching must (among other things) lead students to appropriate knowledge and acquire skills that will enable them to be lifelong learners and to take an active role in

[1] The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a set of surveys conducted to measure the performance of education systems in different countries.

economic, social and cultural life, teachers must exercise and teach these RCS. Although in recent years the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) has placed more emphasis on oral communication and production, the fact remains that reading comprehension (RC) activities are still crucial, if only to feed the oral production tasks.

1.1 Aim and research questions

This MA thesis being a research work in language didactics, I provided myself with data related to that field. The methodology is not unilateral, and tries not to be systematically confined to a single point of view. It thus combines the analysis of scientific literature, the analysis of legal prescriptions from the WBF, declarative data collected after interviewing two Ph.D. students, as well as the analysis of WBF teachers' declarative data (by means of an online survey). Finally, alongside the recognition of the need for and effectiveness of RCS in FL teaching and learning, this dissertation seeks to illustrate the explicit teaching of RCS. This is in fact one of its missions, i.e. with these various analyses, I try to answer the following problem: How to effectively implement the explicit teaching of reading comprehension strategies in high school classes learning a foreign language in the WBF?

To attempt to solve such a problem, the current paper is undertaken in an effort to extend knowledge on the role of explicit strategy teaching to FL readers. It therefore addresses several research questions:

(1a)	What are reading comprehension strategies?
(1b)	What does the explicit teaching of reading comprehension strategies consists in?
(2a)	Is the notion of comprehension strategies included in the CEFR?
(2b)	If so, is an explicit teaching recommended?
(3a)	Is the notion of comprehension strategies included in the reference papers and curricula of the WBF?
(3b)	If so, is an explicit teaching recommended?
(4)	Are there any differences in the different school networks' approach to the explicit teaching of comprehension strategies?
(5)	Is the teaching of comprehension strategies included in secondary-school foreign language teachers of the WBF's ongoing training?
(6a)	Are teachers of the WBF familiar with the notion of comprehension strategies?
(6b)	If so, do they explicitly teach those when practicing reading comprehension in their classroom?

1.2 Outline of the research

This dissertation is structured as follows: after this introduction, it provides a theoretical overview of the main concepts. It describes the notion of RC in FL activities, as well as RCS. Then, it moves on to the description of explicit teaching and what it implies for the teaching of RCS. The purpose of this first chapter is to provide an operational and personal definition of explicit RCS instruction based on the conclusions drawn from today's scientific literature. To this aim, the attitude to the teaching methods and their perception of RCS over time are also examined. The third chapter of this MA thesis deals with the specific place of RCS within the official documents and legal requirements of the WBF. To this extent, quantitative and qualitative analysis of these documents are carried out. The next chapter analyzes declarative data from WBF teachers on explicit strategy instruction collected through an online survey. This chapter presents the materials and methods used to conduct the research as well as the results and general trends that are observed. These are discussed in more details with the help of theory. Finally, chapter five attempts to illustrate a methodological approach for the teaching of one specific RCS. It offers my personal sequence of exercises that is intended to be effective and more equitable in diversifying the ways in which RC is taught. This activity unfortunately could not be practically implemented within the framework of this master's degree. The report of this dissertation then wraps up with a conclusion that answers the research problem mentioned above.

1.3 Scope of the research

This work is based on theory not only specific to WBF teaching but also from other school systems. However, the analyses of the place of RCS and their teaching are related to WBF programs. Furthermore, only declarative data from WBF teachers are analyzed in the questionnaire, but no observation was led in WBF classrooms. It should also be noted that the respondents of the survey are few in number. Finally, concerning the exercises created in the last part of this work, its adequacy with the WBF legal prescriptions and my little professional experience, would make it presumptuous to claim to give the perfect lesson on RCS. For these reasons, the present dissertation does not attempt to draw concrete and absolute conclusions nor to give a general overview of the attitude towards RCS. However, it aims to introduce the subject to possibly serve as an introduction to future research.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The present chapter aims at providing my readers with a theoretical overview of the literature on RC, RCS, and explicit instruction. The objective is to enable them to grasp the main subject of this work. A first section is devoted to the definition of this research's main terms. It focuses on the nature of RC in general. It also seeks to provide a taxonomy of different RCS within the framework of FL teaching as found in the scientific literature and attempts to specify what explicit teaching of these strategies consists in. The second part of this chapter looks at the attitude of teaching methods to RCS and the place they have been given over the years. Then, I have a look at the research that has already been conducted on the explicit teaching of RCS with the aim of summarizing their advantages as well as disadvantages. Ultimately, with the information gathered and summarized in the preceding sections, I attempt to provide an operational definition of explicit RCS instruction to guide the discussion of the following chapters of this MA thesis.

2.1 Definition of key terms

2.1.1 The nature of reading comprehension

The status of second or foreign language[2] readers in a reading activity is not clear and a lot of literature can be found on the subject. Although it is generally accepted that in order to be successful in FL reading, students must have a solid basis in reading in their L1[3] (Barnett, 1988) and that the skills learned in the context of L1 reading can most of the time be transferred to FL reading (Alderson, 2005; Anderson, 1999), there has been an extensive debate about how this happens (Block, 1992). Some have indeed confirmed that the cognitive process of reading, i.e. a reader decodes the graphic shapes of a text and then understands it, remains the same whether it is done in a FL or in one's mother language (Jiang et al., 2020; Upton & Lee-Thompson, 2001). However, some research also suggests that the reading ability and strategy use are dependent on language proficiency and that FL readers sometimes do not recognize cohesive links in the text (Carrell et al., 1989). The debate will not be joined in the present research but

[2] It should be noted that there is a difference in the literature between a foreign language (FL) and a second language (L2). While FL refers to a language that is not spoken by people in the community in question, L2 refers to the language spoken in the community, taught in school to non-native speakers of this language. For example, English is a FL in Belgium because it is not an official language. In contrast, Dutch is the L2 of French-speaking students residing in the Flemish community of Belgium as well as French is the L2 of Dutch-speaking students living in Wallonia.

[3] Let it also be noted that the terms first language (L1) and mother language might not necessarily refer to the same language. French will be taught to a student from the French-speaking part of Belgium as their L1 even though it may not be their mother language.

both literatures will be considered in this theoretical framework, which assumes that the factors to be discussed influence both L1 and FL reading ability.

It is difficult to define the nature of RC, let alone in a simple sentence (Alderson, 2005). This section does not claim to be exhaustive but, hence, aims at being selective and focusing on a common thread of various literature on the subject: the process of reading as an interactive one. Before defining reading as a process through which a reader decodes an author's thoughts to construct meaning comprehension, it is first necessary to identify the main components of the activity that is reading. Those are namely a written text, its reader and their strategies in a particular context. RC varies according to the degree of relationship between these variables. This section brings together the insights of several writers into the subject but Giasson-Lahance's book *La Lecture: De la théorie à la pratique* (1995) and Alderson's volume entitled *Assessing Reading* (2005) were particularly helpful in its development.

2.1.1.1 Approaches to reading

In order to identify how a reader decodes a text, it is necessary to understand how the latter is perceived. Generally speaking, there are two approaches to understanding the processes of perception: the bottom-up approach and the top-down approach.[4] In an analysis of the nature of reading, theorists do not all agree on this nomenclature. Even though, both approaches have to do with 'levels of understanding', reading researchers are in fairly strong agreement that a mix of both these processes applied to RC best represents its interactive nature and what happens when a reader tries to understand a text (Alderson, 2005; Anderson, 1999; Kong, 2019; Sood, 2015). The writers that share this opinion write:

> We would claim that in natural language understanding a simple rule is followed. Analysis proceeds in a top-down predictive manner. Understanding is expectation based. It is only when the expectations are useless or wrong that bottom-up processing begins. (in Alderson, 2005, p. 17)

This quotation insists on the need to carry out these approaches one after the other. Decoding the text, emphasized in the bottom-up approach, and linguistic comprehension, put forward by the top-down approach, are both necessary; they are not self-sufficient nor prevail on each other (Hoover & Gough, 1990). Therefore, RC is seen as an individual process close to reasoning (Alderson, 2005; Goodman, 1988; Kong, 2019; Sood, 2015). Indeed, as will be highlighted later, the ability to understand, recognize and use topical knowledge to make assumptions about

[4] Bottom-up processing basically starts with the understanding of small parts of the text until the understanding of larger entities (Kong, 2019). In contrast, top-down processing starts from the whole of the text to understanding its little parts later on. This approach is reader-driven, which means that it activates the reader's topical knowledge, which will influence the perception of the words on the page (Alderson, 2005; Anderson, 1999; Kong, 2019).

the text differs according to each text, each reader, and the strategies they use (Alderson, 2005; Anderson, 1999; Giasson-Lachance, 1995; Goodman, 1988).

The interactive models of reading will be taken into account in this paper because they consider comprehension as a dynamic construction process that requires the implementation of the more or less complex RCS, which are the main subject of this MA thesis. Indeed, an interactive model of reading appeals to the reader's prior knowledge when the lack of word-understanding has to be filled and to the reader's lexical knowledge when the lack of topic-understanding has to be filled (Alderson, 2005; Anderson, 1999). Kong further asserts that 'reading and comprehending a text is an interactive process where bottom-up processing provides the basic information while top-down processing interplays based on the reader's knowledge' (2019, p. 16). Reading is not seen as the ability to decode the text before comprehending it, or the ability to comprehend it in its entirety before decoding it, but as an ability to perform these two skills in parallel (Alderson, 2005). In other words, the interactive models assert that the process of reading results from the coaction of top-down and bottom-up approaches. Understanding certain parts of a text can reflect the level of comprehension but it is only with a reader's prior knowledge of the topic that the whole text will make sense.[5] To illustrate this, let's imagine someone reading a new text in a FL. This person might understand the vocabulary but might not understand some sentences in which it appears. Therefore, they are unable to make sense of the whole text. However, if they were to think about what they might know about the subject based on the words they understand, it would be easier for them to make sense of the new information.[6] In this case, readers are 'active constructors of their own knowledge' (Alderson, 2005, p. 19). To read, they use syntactic, semantic and graphic cues and it is the prediction, confirmation and integration of these cues that make it possible to define reading as an active process of meaning construction (Giasson-Lachance, 1995). It is necessary to decode or recognize words and to understand the text in a general way, but reading also depends on the ability of a reader to solve problems of comprehension and adjust the strategies they employ as the activity progresses (Barnett, 1988).

In this research, attention is paid to reading in a FL and to the strategies that readers employ during this interactive activity. Some scholars tend to conclude that, 'in second

[5] It is worth noting that involving prior knowledge to understand a text might sometimes lead the reader to make mistakes. This point will be further developed when elaborating a taxonomy of comprehension strategies (see *2.1.3. Comprehension strategies*)

[6] As will be noted later, this can sometimes be problematic and lead the reader astray when transferring knowledge, either linguistic (words that look the same but have different meanings in different languages) or cultural-contextual (the characteristics of a textual genre that are different from one culture to another), from one's native language to the FL.

language reading, knowledge of the second language is a more important factor than first-language abilities' (Alderson, 2005, p. 23), implying that low reading performance is related to a lack of linguistic-topical knowledge rather than to a low quantity of strategies employed. Yet, others, when describing reading as an 'essential skill for English as a second/foreign language student', stress the importance of strategic instruction (Anderson, 1999, p. 1; Tardif, 1997). They insist that an explicit teaching of those strategies can enable learners to make great progress in all academic subjects. In this sense, Carrell (1989) investigates the correlation that exists between L1-, FL-, and L2 readers and reveals that no matter how proficient readers are, what language they read in, or what approach they adopt, only by applying a combination of strategies can they recognize the subtleties of the language (Carrell, 1989; Carrell et al., 1989). Sood finds a consensus when he states that 'this does not mean that focus on language can be ignored' (Sood, 2015, p. 42). Namely, it is important to keep in mind that other issues such as missing vocabulary still have to be overcome not to interfere with the ability to understand a text.

In short, the reading process in this MA thesis is considered as interactive and works as reasoning. It results from a non-hierarchical movement between two approaches, i.e. the bottom-up and the top-down ones, giving a different importance to decoding a text or focusing on linguistic comprehension (Hoover & Gough, 1990). Still, when decoding and comprehending during reading, the reader interacts with the text, their assumptions and the verification of these assumptions making both language knowledge (i.e. knowing, decoding, and understanding the foreign letters and words) and the strategic competence interact with each other to comprehend a text as a whole (Giasson-Lachance, 1995). As will be highlighted later, the author's intention while writing a text as well as the reading context must also be considered as interactive components of the reading activity. Indeed, taking them into account can help identify the main function of a text in order to adapt the reading, which constitutes a comprehension strategy in itself (see *2.1.2 Reading comprehension strategies*) (Goodman, 1988). The following section will serve to explain these interactions.

2.1.1.2 The variables of the reading process

Meaningful reading happens at the intersection between the reading process's components (Anderson, 1999, 2004; Giasson-Lachance, 1995). The reader handles the text by combining their resources and strategies in a particular context in order to reconstruct meaning.

The following figure illustrates this process:

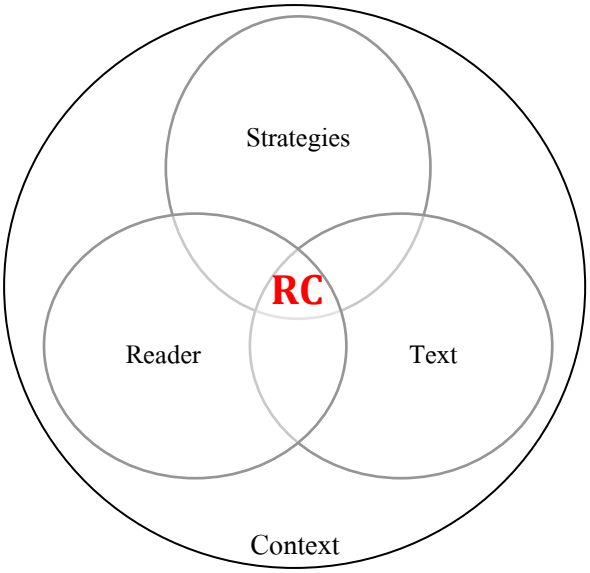


Figure 1: Representation of the interaction between the components of the reading process freely inspired by Giasson-Lahance (1995) and Anderson (2004)

a. Text

The text variable is one of the first components that comes to mind when imagining a reading activity. It refers to the text on its support (the page of a book, an article on the internet, etc.) without which the reading activity could not take place. A text influences its comprehension through four different criteria (Kong, 2019):

(1) Text content
(2) Text genre
(3) Text organization
(4) Text readability[7]

(1) The content of a text is what message it conveys, which will depend on the amount of information present in this text and what it is about. Kong writes about 'information density' (2019, p. 18). The degree of comprehension of a text can vary according to this density of information (Alderson, 2005; Kong, 2019). For example, a text will seem more complicated if it offers a lot of new information unknown to the reader. On the other hand, a text that provides less new information will seem easier to understand. Alderson also adds that the difficulty of a text lies in the quantity of abstract information it gives (2005). The more concrete and imaginable the information in a text, the more understandable it will be.

[7] It is worth mentioning that Anderson (2004) relates readability to fluent reading, i.e. when a text is read at an appropriate rate with adequate comprehension. He mentions fluency as an integral component of the act of reading.

(2) The textual genre is the family to which a text belongs; the categorization of this text in a group of other texts sharing common characteristics (Montero-Arévalo, 2019). The reader adopts different behaviors depending on the nature of the text, which therefore influences the reading activity itself (Giasson-Lachance, 1995). Kong (2019) witnesses a hierarchy of difficulty that can exist between textual genres that sometimes makes it trying to understand the text itself. Awareness of the nature of a text therefore helps to classify it, which helps readers to achieve comprehension (Sood, 2015). People also seem to find the reading of texts from a genre they do not often encounter more difficult than the reading of texts from a more common genre (Alderson, 2005).

(3) The organization of a text is the way in which the text conveys a message (Alderson, 2005; Kong, 2019). For example, the repetition of words or rephrased information within the same text allow a less experienced reader, or one with less knowledge of the subject, to better understand it (Alderson, 2005). Interestingly enough, studies have shown that text organization only has significant impact on comprehension when the subject of a text, or the words it contains, is unfamiliar to the reader (Salager-Meyer, 1991). Text organization also concerns the presence of 'non-verbal or graphic information' (Alderson, 2005, p. 76), i.e. illustrations. Researchers agree that many texts could not be understood without certain images (Alderson, 2005). For example, this would be the case for statistical texts illustrated by diagrams.[8]

(4) The term readability refers to the ease of reading associated with a text. For example, a text containing short sentences will tend to be easier to read than a text containing sentences that are several lines long (Alderson, 2005; Kong, 2019). Also the language level of a text affects its readability (Alderson, 2005). A text that shows a complicated syntax, or less common wording will indeed be harder to process.

Interestingly enough, Giasson-Lahance (1995) only briefly mentions the author's intention as a characteristic influencing the variable text. However, a text, whether it is its content, genre, organization or readability, which all influence the process of reading, is defined by the author's intentions and the choices they made in the first place (Kong, 2019). Therefore, it is never uninteresting to try to determine the author's intentions behind a text.[9] In the context of reading instruction, it can even help students by allowing them to discover the main function

[8] Let us note that texts can also sometimes be so densely filled with (complicated) diagrams that their reading becomes more difficult.

[9] This should not be confused with the romantic tendency to consider the text as an expression of the author's feelings, and the need to analyze their biography to try to understand a text (Spinoy, 2017). Here, it is a question of their intention, i.e. the function which is given to the text.

of a text and thus read it accordingly (Anderson, 1999; Goodman, 1988). Sood describes this interaction as implicit since it 'enables readers to enter into a kind of dialogue with the writer via the printed text and adds to making meaning' (2015, p. 43). In other words, the author, whether they want to act on the reader's emotions (poems, stories), on their behaviors (instruction manuals, problem statements), or on their knowledge (scientific articles), brings a dimension to a text that might influence the reading activity (Kong, 2019). It is also worth noting that the text medium influences its comprehension; nowadays, texts are often displayed on screens and it is difficult to stay concentrated for hours in front of a computer screen (Alderson, 2005).[10]

b. Reader

The reader variable of the figure is also one of the first components that inevitably comes to mind when imagining a reading situation. RC varies among readers, who all have different characteristics that can influence the activity (Alderson, 2005; Giasson-Lachance, 1995; Kong, 2019):

(1) Personal characteristics
(2) Topical knowledge
(3) Affective structures

(1) The personal characteristics of a reader, i.e. their age, their gender, their personality, influence the RC (Alderson, 2005; Kong, 2019; Montero-Arévalo, 2019; Sood, 2015). Inevitably, a child in elementary school will not read the same texts, nor in the same way, as a Ph.D. student. The anxiety provoked by the reading task in an instruction context also varies from one student to another. Research has shown that anxious readers tend to perceive a text very differently than less stressed ones (Alderson, 2005; Kong, 2019; Pearson et al., 1990; Simons & Beckers, 1999). Whereas the former's anxiety towards the reading task leads them to read a text in depth, the less stressed readers will find it easier to approach the reading independently.

(2) The topical knowledge[11] is the background knowledge of the reader, which can be of two sorts: formal or content (Alderson, 2005; Giasson-Lachance, 1995). The former refers to language and linguistic conventions knowledge such as syntax, knowledge of textual genres, and grammar knowledge for example. This is also called reading knowledge. The

[10] However, this statement puzzles me because I personally find it just as difficult to stay focused for hours in front of a text written on paper.
[11] Topical knowledge is also referred to as schema in the reading literature (schemata for plural).

latter first includes the knowledge of the world, which may or may not be relevant to the reading activity, and also the 'subject-matter knowledge', which is directly linked to the content of the text (Alderson, 2005, p. 34). These insights are simultaneously developed and activated during reading to help understand information, make connections, and guide the comprehension (Giasson-Lachance, 1995; Sood, 2015). Both influence how a reader approaches and completes a reading task (Alderson, 2005; Barnett, 1988; Giasson-Lachance, 1995; Kong, 2019).

(3) The affective structures revolve around a reader's intrinsic or extrinsic motivation for the RC activity, their attitude and abilities towards the language of the text, and their attitude towards the reading task (Giasson-Lachance, 1995). They can have positive or negative consequences on the comprehension (Alderson, 2005; Kong, 2019; Sood, 2015). Depending on the reading purpose but also the density of information, a text can namely be considered a source of motivation for the reader or precisely a source of discouragement (Alderson, 2005; Hoover & Gough, 1990).

c. Strategies[12]

The strategies correspond to the mental and physical behaviors and abilities, which are consciously controlled and selected by the readers to overcome challenging tasks (Giasson-Lachance, 1995; Weinstein & Mayer, 1986). The amount of strategies used by readers distinguish good from less effective ones (Alderson, 2005; Barnett, 1988). They are classified into several general types which interact with and support each other: cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, and socio-affective strategies (Giasson-Lachance, 1995; Weinstein & Mayer, 1986).[13] Cognitive strategies are used in order to learn more successfully (Weinstein & Mayer, 1986). They involve deliberate manipulation of language to improve learning and comprehension. The best students, however, can recognize the loss of comprehension and adjust their attitude to the text (Alderson, 2005; Anderson, 1999; Giasson-Lachance, 1995; Weinstein & Mayer, 1986). This brings us to metacognitive strategies, which are often described as thinking about thinking. These are the strategies that learners use to reflect on and identify their abilities and approaches to RC (i.e. monitor and self-evaluate the quality of the overall process). For example, a student might consider how successful they are during reading,

[12] It is worth noting that Giasson-Lachance, in her theory of reading, uses a slightly different nomenclature than the one hereabove. She indeed calls the reader's topical knowledge the 'cognitive structures' (1995, p. 19) and she uses the word 'process' instead of the word strategies. Still, she agrees with other researchers when highlighting that the comprehension of a text is subjective and depends on each of the components (Anderson, 1999, 2004; Giasson-Lachance, 1995; Pearson et al., 1990).

[13] Examples will be discussed in detail in *2.1.3 Comprehension strategies*.

what strategies they do or do not use, what kind of strategies they find most helpful, useful, or difficult, and what they might do in the future to improve their performance in another reading activity. In the context of instruction, it is the ability for students to apply those strategies that will influence the reading process (Alderson, 2005; Anderson, 1999; Barnett, 1988; Giasson-Lachance, 1995; Weinstein & Mayer, 1986). The last type of strategies, i.e. the socio-affective ones, helps the language users adapt their attitude to the (cultural) context in which they use the FL (Council of Europe, 2001).

d. Context

The context variable is the last and equally important component of a reading activity. It concerns the conditions at hand when the reader engages with the text, which influence or 'contaminate' its comprehension (Alderson, 2005, p. 67; Giasson-Lachance, 1995). Whether reading is considered a silent activity in which the emphasis is not on pronouncing words (Sood, 2015) or a not-so-silent process (Lösener, 2019), it is never an isolated activity, i.e. it is not placed in a vacuum but is situated in a context that contributes to the perception given to it by potential readers (Alderson, 2005). Reading can be placed in two types of contexts simultaneously:

(1) A physical context (Giasson-Lachance, 1995)
(2) A socio-cultural context (Alderson, 2005)[14]

(1) Paying attention to the physical context of reading means paying attention to the conditions and activities with which the reading activity is intimately connected and thus paying attention to the purpose of reading (Giasson-Lachance, 1995; Kong, 2019). Indeed, in an instruction context, whether it is a FL class or not, students are presented with texts that they must use in other assignments than reading, such as oral presentations for example. Therefore, RC will be impacted by these different surrounding activities (Barnett, 1988; Sood, 2015). A student will namely not read a text the same way whether they have to answers questions about it later or create an oral presentation. Furthermore, the conditions at hand when reading a text may also influence the RC (Kong, 2019). Indeed, if a student is asked to read a text aloud in front of his classmates, they might be afraid of making a fool of themselves and be embarrassed (Lösener, 2019). These conditions will influence their understanding of the text, i.e. their attention will be focused on the pronunciation of the

[14] Let us mention that Kong also briefly refers to this context which he calls 'external situational context' (2019).

words and the anxiety of the context might lead readers to use fewer strategies to comprehend the text (Kong, 2019).

(2) Every text is also socioculturally situated and this must be taken into account when trying to understand a text. Indeed, both its writing and reading are influenced by the sociocultural conventions of their context. Simons identifies the textual genre as a 'culturally embedded'[15] grouping (2020b). In the context of reading in a FL, the difference between a reader's culture and the text's foreign one can bring difficulties of comprehension. Additionally, as noted earlier in this theoretical review, the interpretation of a text depends strongly on the reader's knowledge of the world, which leads them to give it a subjective interpretation depending on their society and culture. In fact, Barthes himself, in his well-known essay *La mort de l'Auteur*, insists on the status of the socio-cultural context of a text when he writes that,

> Nous savons maintenant qu'un texte n'est pas fait d'une ligne de mots, dégageant un sens unique, en quelque sorte théologique (qui serait le message de l'Auteur-Dieu), mais un espace à dimensions multiples, où se marient et se contestent des écritures variées, dont aucune n'est originelle : le texte est un tissu de citations, issues des mille foyers de la culture. (Barthes, 1984, p. 65)

Here, he means that no text can ever truly be original but rather is created from ideas coming from its context. The relationship that is established between a text and its socio-cultural context is important to lead readers to understand its meaning in a certain way (Barnett, 1988). In the FL classroom, it is therefore important to teach readers to remain cautious because they may be confronted with ideas and social conventions different from their own. This is what Alderson calls 'cross-cultural context' (2005, p. 22). It is also important to ensure that no 'unwanted cultural biases' are introduced when a reader uses prior knowledge to identify a textual genre, for example, and adapt their production accordingly (Alderson, 2005, p. 45; Simons, 2020b).

To conclude, RC is the result of the interaction between different variables: a text, a reader, their strategies, and a multi-dimensional context. To take just a few examples of interactions between the components of the reading process, Kong asserts that 'reading comprehension means an interaction of new information in the text with the old knowledge in a reader's brain', meaning that text content interacts with the reader's topical knowledge (2019, p. 17). Furthermore, poor linguistic knowledge and poor use of metacognitive strategies can limit a reader's comprehension of a text and influence its readability, which highlights another

[15] These terms correspond to my personal translation of Simons' terms 'ancrage culturel' (2020b).

interaction between those variables (Kong, 2019). Those examples, which are particularly relevant to FL reading, have to be taken into account when teaching RC (Alderson, 2005). Another element must, in my opinion, remain important in the minds of today's FL teachers; reading, when taught, must provide enjoyment[16] in students (in Alderson, 2005). It is the teacher's responsibility to do so by helping students to understand texts so that they can get the most out of them and always learn new things (Anderson, 1999). Moreover, as Alice Meurice and Rémy Decorte revealed to us in an interview conducted in collaboration with another student doing her MA thesis in didactics, the influence of language pleasure or, conversely, of language anxiety on students' results has been demonstrated (see *Appendix F*). Perhaps then, by explicitly teaching RCS, one can act on the students' ease in the FL and thus indirectly on their results.

2.1.2 Reading comprehension strategies

RC is a process that requires the correct use of learning strategies. Indeed, in the description of reading as an interactive process in the previous sections, the use of strategies has been described as one of the main components of the activity, which fluctuates according to the degree of relationship between its essential variables (Kong, 2019). It has also been said that the difference between proficient readers and less accomplished ones resides in their use of those strategies (Alderson, 2005; Anderson, 1999; Kong, 2019; Weinstein & Mayer, 1986). In the school context, this suggests that a strong repertoire of RCS may play a critical role in the reading proficiency of secondary-school students.[17] However, RCS have not yet been defined and the question of their identification in concrete terms has remained unanswered in the writing of this MA thesis. This section of my paper is therefore aiming at their definition.

One challenge in classifying RCS is that there is no agreed-upon taxonomy among researchers (Carrell et al., 1998). Experts also use synonymous or ambiguous terms to reference strategies (Anderson, 2004; Palinscar & Brown, 1984):

> (1) 'A cognitive or behavioral action that is enacted [by the learner] under particular contextual conditions, with the goal of improving some aspect of comprehension.' (Graesser, 2007)

[16] This remains a challenge in the school context because the purpose of reading is mostly to check students' comprehension and the pleasure of reading is not worked on much.
[17] This MA thesis will also highlight later how RCS can be taught by the teacher (see *2.1.3 Explicit teaching*).

(2) ‘Strategies are deliberate, conscious and effortful acts employed by the reader to regulate his/her comprehension and to monitor his/her performance throughout each reading comprehension activity.’ (Kong, 2019)
(3) ‘Special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information [and] to help them gain control over their emotions, attitudes, motivation, and values.’ (Papaefthymiou-Lytra, 2009)

Based on these three definitions, strategies can be understood as devices consciously used by the learner to facilitate the comprehension.[18] Not only does the first definition highlight the role of strategies, it also insists on the fact that learners understand, store, and retrieve new content of information depending on the resources they have at their disposal. The second definition still highlights the goal of strategies, i.e. to help comprehend a text, but it also insists on another aspect; strategies help in thinking about what one is doing during reading, i.e. they serve metacognition. Indeed, as already mentioned before, the best students can plan, monitor, and evaluate (i.e. self-test) what kind of strategies work best and when to use them (Alderson, 2005; Anderson, 1999; Giasson-Lachance, 1995; Weinstein & Mayer, 1986). The third definition implies a socio-affective aspect of strategies that help overcome differences in culture in any language communication task (reception, interaction, production, and mediation). Likewise, the CEFR considers (meta)cognitive and socio-affective strategies as two sides of the same coin since the purpose of learning a FL is to understand and be able to communicate (Council of Europe, 2001). In the context of this dissertation, the strategies that help language users to read and learn from a written text and the strategies that help the completion of a RC activity will be of importance. Moreover, as highlighted by the second definition above, not only do the students have to learn (and be taught) RCS but they should also be taught how to control and apply them consciously in new learning contexts to increase their performance in reading (Alderson, 2005; Anderson, 2004; Carrell et al., 1989; Giasson-Lachance, 1995; Kong, 2019). In fact, in the earlier mentioned interview, one of our interviewees even insists on the importance of introducing RCS from the beginning of learning so that learners can choose which one(s) they prefer and use them systematically (see *Appendix F*). Indeed, the use and choice of strategies is specific to each individual who might prefer different strategies to compensate for a lack of knowledge (Alderson, 2005; Anderson, 1999; Carrell et al., 1998). Besides, even though a reader may favor one over the other, RCS are rarely seen in isolation, i.e. researchers agree that they are a combination of actions to be handled in order to help

[18] As stated before, there are several general types of strategies that are enabled during the RC (see *c. Strategies*).

comprehension and complete a reading assignment, which adds to the idea that learners have to be made familiar with them (Anderson, 1999, 2004; Carrell, 1989; Carrell et al., 1989).

Pearson et al. (1990) have reviewed the learning strategies used by successful readers to understand a text. Their report compiled a list of RCS created on the basis of research about teaching RC from the 1980s. Based on Kletzien's principle (1991) that the difference between high-achieving and low-achieving students lies in their knowledge of strategies and in their use of them, this thesis considers that poor readers could benefit from good readers' strategies. Indeed, while good readers score higher because they are aware of their use of strategies, less good readers have difficulty in this regard (Kletzien, 1991). Therefore, pedagogical adaptations of these strategies have been made. An example is the Strategic Instruction Model (SIM) established by the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning (1996), which provides teachers with routines and strategies to help students learn and deal with complex content.[19] One module of SIM was applied to reading. These strategies have also been adapted for FL teaching purposes. For example, Anderson (1999) makes up an effective list of issues to address when focusing on teaching strategies in FL classes. *Table 1* presents the three classifications. There are eight strategies in the ACTIVE model (Anderson, 1999), which are each represented by a letter: **A**ctivate prior knowledge, **C**ultivate vocabulary, **T**each for comprehension, **I**ncrease reading rate, **V**erify strategies, and **E**valuate progress. Each of these letters appears in red in *Table 1* where they have been paired with the corresponding RCS of the two taxonomies. In order to create this MA thesis's definition, all three theories will be taken into account. It is nonetheless the ACTIVE model that will serve as the basis for this dissertation's theoretical framework because it is the only one of the three models that specifies its application for FL.

[19] The strategies that will be presented in this MA thesis concern reading. More information about this model and the other subjects it applies to can be found on the University of Kansas website at http://sim.kucrl.org/.

ANDERSON (1999)	PEARSON ET AL. (1990)	STRATEGIC INSTRUCTION MODEL (1996)
Activate prior knowledge	Proficient readers constantly **search for connections between what they know and** what they encounter as **new information** in the texts they read.	
Cultivate vocabulary		Understanding Academic Language: Proficient readers **understand how words, phrases and grammar interplay** to create well-formed sentences.
		Word Identification and Word Mapping Strategy: Proficient readers successfully **decode and identify unknown words** based on their prefixes, suffixes, and stems.
Teach for comprehension	Proficient readers **constantly monitor the adequacy** of the models of text meaning that they build.	Self-Questioning Strategy: Proficient readers **question the text**, predict the answers to those questions, search for the answers to those questions as they read, and paraphrase the answers to themselves.
	Proficient readers **make inferences** during and after reading to achieve a full, integrated understanding of what they read.	Inference Strategy: Proficient readers **make inferences** about information they have read and answer inferential questions.
Increase reading rate	Proficient readers **distinguish important from less important ideas** in the texts they read.	Main Idea Strategy: Proficient readers **identify the details of a passage**, determine how they are related, **and infer the main idea**.
	Proficient readers **synthesize information** within and across texts and reading experiences.	Paraphrasing and Summarizing Strategy: Proficient readers **identify and paraphrase** words, phrases, sentences, and topics **to create summaries**.
		Visual Imagery Strategy: Proficient readers **create mental movies** of narrative passages and **visualize the scenery**, characters, and action to describe the scenes to themselves as they read a passage.
Verify strategies	Proficient readers **ask questions of themselves, the authors** they encounter **and the texts** they read.	(Self-Questioning Strategy)
Evaluate progress	Proficient readers **repair faulty comprehension** once they realize they have failed to understand something.	(Self-Questioning Strategy)

Table 1: Representation of Anderson (1999)*'s ACTIVE framework, Pearson et al.* (1990)*'s RCS taxonomy, and SIM* (1996)[20]

[20] Note that the order of presentation of the strategies in this table is not hierarchical but follows Anderson (1999)'s taxonomy (which is represented in the first column) that will serve as the basis for this section. The bold print has been added to highlight the key idea of each strategy.

The first strategy consists in making connections between the reader's prior knowledge and the new information in the text. This is often referred to as anticipation based on formal or content knowledge. In fact, as already mentioned before (see *2.1.1 The nature of reading comprehension*), readers' general knowledge influences the way they read, understand and remember a text (Anderson, 1999; Giasson-Lachance, 1995; Sood, 2015). For example, based on the illustrations, readers might apply their knowledge of a topic to understand the information contained in the text. This facilitates and guides the reading; it allows for a deeper understanding by enabling the integration of newly read information with the already known (Pearson et al., 1990). It is the teacher's role to help students make these connections. However, relying on prior knowledge in the context of FL reading classes carries some risks. First, students may have no background knowledge to base their reading on. Indeed, knowledge of the world is not only established in class and FL learners all have different backgrounds (Papaefthymiou-Lytra, 2009). In this case, it is also the teacher's role to provide students with knowledge on the topic and make sure that every learner starts reading the text with sufficient information about it (Anderson, 1999). Another solution to overcome the lack of background knowledge on a particular subject is to suggest a panel of topics so that the students have background knowledge on at least some of them.[21] Then, there is a risky tendency for FL readers to build their comprehension on inaccurate knowledge and thus have misconceptions about the text and its topic (Anderson, 1999). Indeed, teachers must keep in mind that students are facing a foreign culture that they might not know (or know only a little) and that might also be different from their own (Alderson, 2005; Montero-Arévalo, 2019). These risks can be held responsible for the lack of 'curricular attention' given to this strategy (Pearson et al., 1990, p. 7). Pearson et al. (1990) thus reported a series of studies focused on overcoming these risks. Readers were first tested and those able to identify anomalous information while reading a text thanks to their prior knowledge were qualified as good readers, whereas the people who could not identify any anomalies were qualified as poor readers. Later, when poor readers were taught that they already had ideas in their heads and needed to use them, their reading performance increased. Another research focused on students basing their understanding of a text on inaccurate knowledge. Scientists then taught students to change their inappropriate knowledge by encouraging them to compare it with the information they found in textbooks. This study revealed itself effective because the students eventually realized their errors and were able to understand the text more accurately. So, while one can be wary of these misconceptions and the risks that prior knowledge can bring, these difficulties seem to be solvable by simply

[21] For more information on this subject, refer to V. Devreux and B. Monville. (2005). *L'accès libre: une reconfiguration efficace du métier de l'élève et de l'enseignant ? Observation et analyse des conditions d'efficacité: Rapport intermédiaire Première année de recherche*. Université de Liège.

teaching FL readers how to activate their prior knowledge, i.e. thinking about what one knows or making some research (Anderson, 1999).

Based on the finding that a lack of vocabulary is strongly correlated with comprehension inefficiency, learners should be taught adequate vocabulary in the long term to be able to read better (Anderson, 1999; University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning, 1996). Indeed, on the one hand, knowledge of vocabulary influences the reader's understanding of a text, and on the other hand, reading also contributes to vocabulary development (Giasson-Lachance, 1995). In the context of RC in a FL, the process is the same and researchers agree to say that both basic vocabulary and less common words (specific to the topic of the text for example) have to be taught (Anderson, 1999; Harris, 2009). Teachers should namely focus on integrating new words, whether specific or less complicated, with images, context, or the student's prior knowledge to help them memorize them. Research also insists on the teaching of basic vocabulary such as discourse features or transition linking words in the text to help readers understand its structure (Anderson, 1999; Tollefson, 2006). Furthermore, based on the assumption that the reader is unlikely to get a deep understanding of a word they are encountering for the first time, another important point in the teaching of vocabulary concerns its frequency. Indeed, if students encounter the same word in multiple contexts, they will be able to construct a more complex understanding of the word's meaning (Anderson, 1999; Tollefson, 2006). Therefore, they have to read a variety of texts in sufficient quantity. If this vocabulary instruction prior to the reading task is not sufficient and students still encounter new words during the reading of texts, strategies can be used to address this vocabulary gap (Anderson, 1999). This is especially what the second strategy of the ACTIVE framework consists in; teachers should encourage students to look around the unknown word, i.e. to derive its meaning from contextual information (Anderson, 1999). Words should be linked to the general theme of the text where they appear. Then, readers should look at the clues given by the part of the text in which the new word is found. The most common clues encountered in the context are definitions, synonyms, summary words, comparisons, examples, oppositions, antonyms, and groupings (University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning, 1996). It should be noted that this is a difficult task for FL learners. Indeed, research shows that to be able to deduce the meaning of words out of context, one needs to know between 80% and 90% of the vocabulary of the whole text (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). This is, thus, more of a strategy for proficiency readers or L1 readers. Nonetheless, as mentioned earlier, less proficient reader can benefit from the awareness of high-achieving readers' strategies and try to apply this one (Kletzien, 1991). Sometimes though, sentences are not complete enough to allow readers to guess the meaning of a word. Therefore, they also have to be taught to infer the meaning of a

word from its etymology, i.e. readers must look inside the word and apply what is called the word mapping strategy (Anderson, 1999; Harris, 2009; Tollefson, 2006). Specifically, this strategy invites them to check their knowledge of a word's structure (prefix, stem, suffix). After identifying its different parts and their different meanings, the students must be able to group these together to predict the general sense of the word. Simons and Beckers (1999) devoted one of their experimental studies to this particular strategy. After learning the meaning of the suffix *less*, students were asked to formulate hypotheses about the meaning of the adjective *backless*. The lack of any context led to wild guesses such as *invertebrate*. Then, the context of the word was clarified by adding the determiner *a* and the common noun *dress* on either side of the adjective *backless*. With this context, the students were able to rule out incorrect suggestions and deduce the meaning of the adjective. It goes without saying that to conclude the learning of such a strategy, teachers must always encourage his students to verify if their predictions of the word's meaning were right by means of their common sense for example (Harris, 2009; Kong, 2019).

Activation of background knowledge and cultivation of vocabulary are thus essential to the RC process. Still, in many reading instruction programs, a greater emphasis is unfortunately placed on testing these strategies than on teaching them in order to bring learners to optimal comprehension (Block, 1992). The **T** in the ACTIVE model insists on counteracting this tendency, i.e. readers have to learn (and be taught) mechanisms to control and sequence their reading to understand new written texts rather than be tested on the application of these mechanisms (Alderson, 2005; Anderson, 1999). Students should namely learn how to pause, ask questions, take time to check with prior knowledge and common sense, make predictions, reread for clarification, and think about what they read before, during, and after the reading activity in order to control their progress (Kong, 2019; Pearson et al., 1990; Sood, 2015). This metacognitive process called monitoring is an ability that differentiates competent readers from more novice ones (Block, 1992; Weinstein & Mayer, 1986). To include these ideas in a FL classroom, teachers need to organize sessions in which students get to plan the reading activity. They learn to identify the purpose of the activity so that they know what to look for while going through the text (Anderson, 1999). They also learn to selectively read parts of the text, and scan it as a whole to identify the more difficult or less clear parts of the text that deserve more attention (Alderson, 2005; Barnett, 1988; Pearson et al., 1990). For example, a teacher could use a worksheet before a reading task, which guides students into evaluating what they already

know, what they are trying to find, and the strategies that they are going to use to do that.[22] Teachers can also use some sort of strategy evaluation matrix to help the students identify the declarative, procedural and conditional knowledge of the strategies they use.[23] During their monitoring of comprehension, readers also have to infer new information from explicit data, i.e. read between the lines to understand more deeply or detect inconsistencies in their comprehension (Block, 1992; University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning, 1996). Lastly, teachers have to teach students how to evaluate the activity after reading (Weinstein & Mayer, 1986). Readers should namely consider and evaluate how well they accomplish the task, how well the strategies they use work, what information they understood and retained, and what they might do the same or differently in the future (Kong, 2019; Palinscar & Brown, 1984; Pearson et al., 1990). During the evaluation of the activity, they should ensure that they can respond, in any way, to the text but they should also take steps to plan for the next reading. However, not every learner knows how to monitor their comprehension. The teacher's role is, therefore, to aim at guiding learners through the activity and ensure that they understand what and why they are reading (Anderson, 1999). To do so, they should get students to give verbal reports of their cognitive activity, i.e. they have to use think-aloud protocols that allow them to know exactly what is going on in their mind when engaged in RC (Block, 1992).[24] Based on the assumption that all students will not use the same strategies because there is no two learners who learn in the same way (Meirieu, 2017), contact with others' verbalizations (teacher's or learners') enables students to get acquainted with new strategies they might not have thought about so as to (maybe) adopt them later on (Anderson, 1999, 2004). Still, as will be insisted on later, the T in the ACTIVE model ensures that the primary goal of a RC activity is to understand the text, not to apply strategies. Besides, it insists on the inadequacy to try to test strategies. The T in the ACTIVE model thus enables learners to become increasingly autonomous in their RC by making them aware of their strengths or weaknesses (Anderson, 1999; Barnett, 1988; Mason et al., 2016).

The fourth step of Anderson (1999)'s theory focuses on increasing student's reading rate. Increasing the reading rate is not a matter of reading quickly without remembering

[22] This strategy is based on the K-W-L model developed by Ogle D. M. (1986). It serves to visualize and organize strategies activation in a table with the following headings: what we Know, what we Want to find out, what we Learned and still need to Learn.

[23] In his research on cognitive psychology, Tardif (1997) identifies three categories of knowledge, the first of which is the declarative one that essentially corresponds to theoretical knowledge. The second one, i.e. the procedural knowledge of the new learned material, is the ability to apply the strategy. The conditional knowledge induces knowing under what conditions (i.e. why and when) to use the new learned material to solve the task.

[24] Teachers first demonstrate how to do this by showing their thinking as they read a passage, students are then invited to do the same, with the teacher controlling the quality of their reflection. These protocols will also be further discussed in this dissertation (see *2.1.3 Explicit teaching*).

anything, but of improving students' RC through the development of automatic techniques, which help them spend more time effectively understanding a text (Anderson, 1999; Hagaman et al., 2010). Reading faster requires knowing where to focus, being more active, and managing to remember information (Anderson, 1999). Strategies used to do so, serve to locate and distinguish between what is important in a text and what is less important (Pearson et al., 1990; University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning, 1996). Indeed, recognizing the main idea of a text not only helps readers to understand a paragraph read, but also, as will be mentioned later, to remember the content afterwards (Pearson et al., 1990; Qismullah et al., 2017). Those strategies that can be exercised by FL teachers include skimming and scanning. The difference between these two techniques is the following: skimming a text allows to find its main information, whereas scanning it engages the reader in a more thorough comprehension during which readers extract specific details based on the purpose of the reading. Both these techniques are applied without reading the whole text or translating any of its parts (Hagaman et al., 2010; Qismullah et al., 2017). For example, when skimming a text, the teacher should encourage the students to read the first and last sentences of the paragraph because the main idea of the text is usually stated in these parts (Qismullah et al., 2017). If the text is long, students should also learn to pick up key words in the body of the text (Hagaman et al., 2010; Qismullah et al., 2017). On the other hand, when reading is done in order to find and understand more specific information, teachers must encourage readers to keep in mind only the particular information to be found, find clues that will help them find that required information, and if the clues are found, read the section in which they are found to obtain the necessary information (Qismullah et al., 2017). These clues can simply be spotted by reading the subtitles or by paying attention to the images in a text for example. Both skimming and scanning increase reading speed in order to achieve better comprehension (Anderson, 1999; Pearson et al., 1990; University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning, 1996). Secondly, as mentioned before, students have to learn how to be more active during reading to increase reading rate, i.e. they have to learn how to reprocess what they read and cross-reference it with information from other texts (Pearson et al., 1990; University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning, 1996). A highly effective way to do so, is to encourage students to rephrase texts in their own words (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Hagaman et al., 2010). For instance, both efficient and less-efficient readers could use the main ideas and details identified with skimming and scanning to gradually write summaries of paragraphs and then longer texts (Cordero-Ponce, 2000; Hagaman et al., 2010; Pearson et al., 1990). For example, teachers could encourage them to eliminate redundancy and irrelevant information, replace lists of items with a single label, and identify topic sentences that must appear in their summaries (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Cordero-Ponce, 2000; Pearson et al., 1990; University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning,

1996). The strategies for cultivating vocabulary identified earlier can also be useful in producing quality summaries. Writing a summary can be taught as a comprehension and a studying strategy, that is, it can help students comprehend a text but also memorize the information it contains (Pearson et al., 1990). Indeed, teachers could also encourage students to represent and organize their summaries into a schematic structure, which identifies concepts and relationships, to recall the information better (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). For narratives, this representation generally takes the form of story plans highlighting the chronology of events or drawings, which help to remember the actions of the story. Informative texts, on the other hand, can be organized using diagrams to represent important data or tables, and mind-maps to highlight any comparison, contrast, cause, and consequence. Another useful way to recall important information is to visualize new words or information in a memorable or ridiculous situation (Weinstein & Mayer, 1986). Indeed, students should be encouraged to create images in their minds during the reading activity. With these strategies, the readers should be able to approach the text with more automaticity and spend less time decrypting it than actually understanding it (Anderson, 1999).

As has already been mentioned in this section, being able to question comprehension is what differentiates proficient readers from less proficient ones (Block, 1992). The last two steps of Anderson (1999)'s theory, i.e. V (verification of strategies) and E (evaluation of strategies), also serve to make this difference and help in the monitoring of one's comprehension after the reading task. First, Anderson (1999) insists on the importance of reflecting on one's RC and verifying the strategies implemented. Teachers should namely teach students how to look back on the text, i.e. reread difficult passages to evaluate their comprehension (Alderson, 2005). Therefore, readers have to learn to ask questions about how they have executed the task but also the authors they encounter in texts (esp. the message they initially wanted to communicate), and the texts they read. This, as with the previous strategy, involves bringing out the structure of texts to prioritize and extract the information (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Pearson et al., 1990). During the realization of this strategy, the use of think-aloud protocols has proven to be very effective (Anderson, 2004; Block, 1992).[25] Furthermore, to verify the comprehension, readers should be encouraged to pay attention to the structure of the text and its genre (Pearson et al., 1990). Indeed, as reading 'implies the interpretation of what an author intends to say to an audience' (Montero-Arévalo, 2019, p. 86), it is essential for students to learn how to identify and understand those initial intentions, i.e. the purpose of the text. Furthermore, the text's structure, which classifies it under a certain main genre helps to recognize this main purpose

[25] For a further development of a methodology see *2.1.3 Explicit teaching*.

(Anderson, 1999; Montero-Arévalo, 2019; Salager-Meyer, 1991). However, a reader should not turn a blind eye to the mentioned earlier cultural differences or 'unwanted cultural biases' identified by Alderson (2005) that may exist between genres. Basically this can be done through the genre-based approach described in Montero-Arévalo (2019)'s work, i.e. the explicit teaching of an approach that invites students to spot the main characteristics of a textual genre. This approach helps in a better grasp and comprehension of the main information, which results in positive improvements in reading (and writing) comprehension. This evaluation of comprehension and strategies is also represented in the ACTIVE framework (Anderson, 1999). Indeed, the author provides us with a checklist that can be used after reading to verify the strategies employed, which can be found in ***Appendix A***. It includes evaluating what one has learned and how good one is doing in order to concentrate one's reading. It also include going over the purpose and tone of a reading passage so one can understand and recall it better.[26]

Then, as verifying strategies have to be taught to students, so does evaluating the results of those strategies to adapt them and repair any mistake (Anderson, 1999; Pearson et al., 1990). This is done by means of evaluation strategies, which are explained in the last step of the ACTIVE model. Indeed, it is important to teach L2 readers how to use a given strategy but 'they must also be taught how to determine if they are successful in their use of that strategy' (Anderson, 1999, p. 70). Above all, evaluating strategies are metacognitive processes that have to be taught to help students learn from their mistakes for further reading activities (Palinscar & Brown, 1984; Pearson et al., 1990). Indeed, allowing students to identify the mistakes they make by means of self-generated questions encourages them to think about those mistakes and modify their comprehension based on newly understood information (Pearson et al., 1990). Therefore, they memorize the information better than if the teacher was asking the questions (Anderson, 1999; Pearson et al., 1990). However, some studies prove that teaching students how to effectively ask questions does not always lead to an amelioration of RC (Pearson et al., 1990). Still, fix up or repair strategies allow 'to look-up close at strengths and weaknesses that [the] students have' (Anderson, 1999, p. 88). In addition, Anderson (1999, 2004) advises teachers to keep records of students' evaluations, so that they can represent their improvements and serve as motivation.

Finally, one must keep in mind that the use of strategies, like any other component of the ACTIVE model, is directly related to the student's individual motivation for reading (Anderson, 1999; Hoover & Gough, 1990). Indeed, by making students more active and proposing effective strategies, teachers will contribute to their feeling of efficiency in the

[26] Let us note that other strategies mentioned earlier in this section are also found in this checklist.

reading task, which will provide them with greater motivation (Anderson, 1999). It is therefore important for teachers to plan and select appropriate reading material (Anderson, 1999). If we carefully consider the above classifications, we quickly realize why the literature insists on the necessity to consider RCS in close connection with one another (Anderson, 1999, 2004; Carrell, 1989; Carrell et al., 1989). From a practical point of view, it is indeed difficult to teach each of these strategies independently of the others. For example, readers cannot learn to produce questions and to summarize a text without emphasizing its structure or the main information it develops, or even without calling upon their topical knowledge. In spite of that, it is the characteristics of the task that will determine which strategies will be useful to the readers (Kong, 2019). Indeed, as the purpose of the reading task determines, to a certain degree, what type of reading to conduct, it also determines what strategies to employ. For instance, reading a text for criticism induces the need for background knowledge to base one's criticism on (Kong, 2019). Besides, as already indicated, studies have shown that children are unequally skilled in the use of strategies (Anderson, 1999; Jiang et al., 2020; Meirieu, 2017). Indeed, some learners are able to implement them intuitively, based on previous learning and experience; others, however, need to learn about them as well as they need practice to do so. Therefore, as it has already been insisted on earlier, in order to strive for equitable teaching, strategies must be explicitly taught to students both with and without learning difficulties (Carrell, 1989; Carrell et al., 1989).

After the development of this section, a number of questions remain unanswered. The first is to ask what strategy, or set of strategies, should be taught according to the age and level of the students, or according to the task they have to accomplish. The answer may depend on the legal requirements that will be analyzed later in this thesis (see *3. Comprehension strategies in official documents and legal requirements of the Wallonia-Brussels federation*). Nevertheless, the present thesis does not allow conclusions to be drawn about the amount of instruction time required for each strategy. The second question concerns the stability over time of performance gains resulting from explicit strategy instruction. Long-term studies will therefore also be analyzed to allow me to aim at giving an answer to this question (see *2.3 The explicit teaching of comprehension strategies: Pros and cons*). Finally, the last question concerns the relationship between RCS and their automaticity. Indeed, some strategies become automatic mechanisms to more competent readers (Carrell, 1989; Carrell et al., 1989, 1998). This is the case, in particular, for mechanisms related to the activation and use of prior knowledge or vocabulary as opposed to the more metacognitive evaluating or repair strategies. The present MA thesis does not allow to determine what strategies are likely to be automated more quickly in students and other research may have to be conducted to find an answer.

2.1.3 Explicit teaching

As stated before, the use of strategies influences the reading activity because it interacts with the readers, the text and their context.[27] It is also essential for readers to consciously develop strategies to become successful and 'more aware of the strategies that they need and are using' (Kong, 2019, p. 23). However, in the context of FL reading instruction, researchers state that the students cannot appropriate all the strategies on their own. It is then often a question of scaffolding the learning, i.e. to carry it out step by step (Anderson, 1999; Hattie, 2010; Jiang et al., 2020). This is where the teacher comes in; teaching strategies must involve explicit instruction through repeated and diversified training (Mason et al., 2016; Rosenshine, 1983). Being an explicit teacher has proven to be particularly effective in improving students' skills in all types of subjects (Alderson, 2005; Hattie, 2010; Pressley & Harris, 1990). Indeed, Hattie's work *Visible learning*, which allows researchers to combine data from more than 800 meta-analyses and examines to what extend teachers' interventions can make a difference in students' learning, emphasizes the value of explicit teaching. It states that 'the visibility of learning from the students' perspective needs to be known by teachers so that they can have a better understanding of what learning looks and feels like for the students' (Hattie, 2010, p. 116). If we consider Houssaye's model of the pedagogical triangle,[28] focusing on learning suggests placing a lot of importance on the relationship between knowledge and students (Fagnant, 2019). The latter must be helped by the teacher to outline their relationship with knowledge. One way to do this is to make reasoning patterns clear (Fagnant, 2019). In other words, the teacher has to explain the strategies that can and will be used to complete a task. As Fagnant highlights it in her syllabus (2019), it is precisely what explicit teaching is all about. In the 80's Rosenshine adapts the pedagogical trend initiated by Engelmann in the 60's called *Direct Instruction*, and describes a systematic method of presenting material in small steps, pausing to check for learners' understanding and soliciting active and effective participation from all of them (1983). This came to be called *Explicit Teaching*. Bissonnette explains that *Explicit Teaching* is one of the most effective approaches for learners with learning disabilities (2015). However, it has also been proven that explicit instruction is equally beneficial for all students when it comes to new or complex material (Rosenshine, 1983; Wautelet, 2018).

This approach to teaching can be subdivided into three main steps: modelling, guided practice and self-directed practice (Gauthier et al., 2013). Nevertheless, it must also be preceded by a preparation stage and followed by a strengthening stage (Gauthier et al., 2013; Giasson-

[27] See *2.1.1.1 The variables of the reading process* for the definition of these terms.
[28] This modeling, which can be found in Fagnant's syllabus (2019), is presented in *Appendix B*.

Lachance, 1995; Rosenshine, 1983). We can therefore see explicit teaching in three main stages, the second of which involves three subsequent activities. All these explanations are included in Wautelet's diagram below representing the methodology of Explicit Teaching (2018):

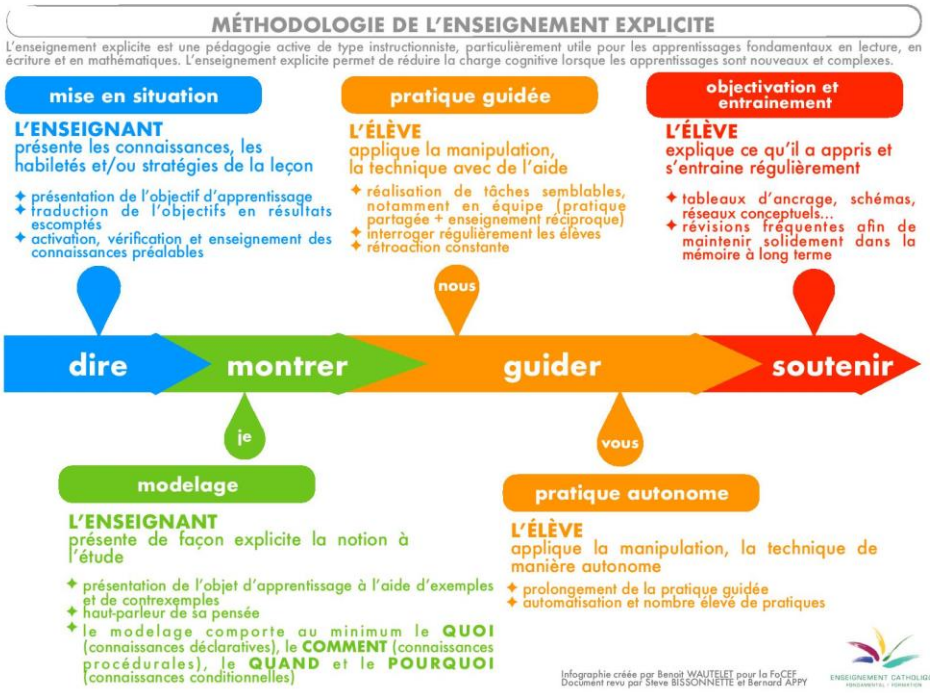


Figure 2: Linear diagram of the methodology of explicit teaching according to Wautelet (2018)

The phrase 'explicit teaching' indicates by itself that the purpose of using this method is to avoid leaving room for implicit learning (Bissonnette, 2015). The teacher must offer clear information and, when teaching something new, explain all the steps in a structured way. As Bissonnette explains in an interview for the magazine *à babord!*,

> [L'enseignant] met en place un ensemble de mesures de soutien aidant les élèves dans leur processus d'apprentissage. Ces mesures de soutien ou d'étayage passent par les actions de dire, de montrer et de guider les élèves dans leur apprentissage. (Bissonnette, 2015)

The action verbs referred to above are also found in Rosenshine's theory when he points out the 'presentation of material to be learned', which has to be 'demonstrated', and when he insists on the terms 'teacher-led practice' (1983, pp. 4, 6). Following this, as it has already been mentioned before and because Rosenshine highlights the 'feedback and correctives' in his work (1983, p. 9), the action verb 'support'[29] can also be added in order to allow students to be subsequently able to remember the targeted learning. In this thesis, the presentation of the stages

[29] This refers to the French verb 'soutenir', which will be used later in this work.

of explicit teaching below is essentially based on the work of Gauthier et al. (2013). The reasons for this choice are the following: First of all, these authors are those who have written in the most complete way on the subject, having devoted a volume to it. Besides, they are also probably the most influential ones.[30]

Gauthier et al. refer to the first step of this teaching method as 'preparation of learning management',[31] more often referred to as (P) throughout their research (2013). This stage involves presenting the learning objectives, clarifying them by stating what will be expected of the students, and activating, verifying and teaching prior knowledge if necessary. It is a bit of a warm-up where the teacher defines the *what* of the lesson, which refers to the declarative knowledge of the strategy, i.e. its identification and definition (Gauthier et al., 2013; Giasson-Lachance, 1995). In the classroom, for instance, the teacher might say, "We are going to work on this specific strategy" in order to define the new material. Then, their role is to translate this definition into expected results. They would then say, "When I see the strategy, it looks like this", highlighting how to identify it. It is during this step that the students' topical knowledge should be activated (Gauthier et al., 2013; Rosenshine, 1983). This step can consist in sharing moments between students who are already using this strategy (how they do it, their previous experiences, etc.) and students who are not familiar with it.

Gauthier et al. name the second stage of explicit teaching 'the interactive phase and interaction with the students',[32] more often referred to as (I) throughout their research (2013). As already mentioned, this stage contains three complementary activities to be carried out in the following order: modeling, guided practice and self-directed practice. During a lecture within the class of Didactique Générale at the University of Liège (Fagnant, 2019), Bissonnette had also referred to these steps by the personal pronouns *I*, *we* and *you* in that order. With these pronouns he was then referring to the words of the teacher who says "I show, we do together and then you do alone". First, when modeling, the process must be transparent, i.e. the teacher must aim at being an example for the students, showing *what* they are doing but also *how* it should be done (i.e. the procedural knowledge), *why* it will be used and *when* it should be used (i.e. the conditional knowledge) (Anderson, 2004; Gauthier et al., 2013; Giasson-Lachance, 1995; Wautelet, 2018). Whereas the procedural knowledge links the new learning to the success of the task, the conditional one links it to its literary context (Giasson-Lachance, 1995). As

[30] A lecture on the subject was even given by Steve Bissonnette as part of the Didactique Générale course at the University of Liege during the 2019-2020 academic year.
[31] This formulation is a literal translation of the terms 'La préparation de la gestion des apprentissages' used in Gauthier et al. (2013, p. 99). From now on, this translation will be used to refer to this stage.
[32] This formulation is a literal translation of the terms 'La phase interactive et l'interaction avec les élèves' used in Gauthier et al. (2013, pp. 137, 173). From now on, this translation will be used to refer to this stage.

mentioned earlier, this step is called 'thinking aloud' in the literature and should enable students to replicate their teacher's thinking (Barnett, 1988). It consists in putting a speaker on the teacher's thoughts, i.e. what is going on in their head when they apply the new learned material, and verbalize it (Anderson, 2004; Gauthier et al., 2013; Wautelet, 2018).[33] It is therefore important for the teacher to provide examples and counterexamples that illustrate the reasoning and allow for discussion between the students (Anderson, 2004; Gauthier et al., 2013; Pressley & Harris, 1990; Rosenshine, 1983; Wautelet, 2018). Next, the teacher can move on to guided practice, in which they offer temporary support to the students so that they can generalize the new learning to other contexts and thus transfer it (Gauthier et al., 2013). Guided practice is often done in small groups to encourage discussion and sharing of strategies among the students themselves (Alphonse, 2014; Mason et al., 2016; Rosenshine, 1983). Then comes the time for the self-directed practice during which students can check their understanding of the learning on their own and consolidate it (Gauthier et al., 2013). It is at this point that the teacher can notice if students might need a little more explanation and therefore another guided practice (Gauthier et al., 2013). They could then suggest additional training to ensure that the students master the new learned material. The ultimate goal of this step is to promote retention of the learning in the future (Gauthier et al., 2013; Rosenshine, 1983).

Gauthier et al. refer to the third and last stage of explicit teaching as 'the strengthening',[34] most often referred to by the first letter of the French word *consolidation* (C) throughout their research (2013). This stage refers to the pedagogical approaches that the teacher adopts to consolidate the students' learning, i.e. to memorize what they have learned. Before moving on to reinvestment and consolidation of learning, it is important for the teacher to objectify the newly learned material. They must namely question the students and give feedback on their learning (Gauthier et al., 2013; Rosenshine, 1983). It is during this step that the class, teacher and students, might create a visual representation of the strategy, i.e. a mind map to ensure that all students retain the important information (Alderson, 2005; Wautelet, 2018). It is also through this visual representation that the teacher will be able to correct any misconceptions that students may have (Bissonnette, 2015; Gauthier et al., 2013; Rosenshine, 1983). When all these steps are completed, it is important for the students to frequently reinvest the newly learned material on their own in order to maintain it in their long-term memory (Gauthier et al., 2013). It is then the teacher's role to reactivate it through assignments, for example (Alderson, 2005; Gauthier et al., 2013; Rosenshine, 1983).

[33] A good example of modeling can be found in this video: https://vimeo.com/177106821
[34] This formulation is a literal translation of the term 'La consolidation' used in Gauthier et al. (2013, p. 213). From now on, this translation will be used to refer to this step of the method.

When applied to RCS teaching, Winograd and Hare (1988) suggest a list of six questions that FL reading teachers should address to stimulate the metacognitive awareness of strategies. *Table 2* below summarizes these questions and some information as found in Anderson (Anderson, 1999).[35]

1	*What is the strategy?* Teachers should be able to identify or provide a definition of the strategy.
2	*Why should the strategy be learned?* Teachers should facilitate the comprehension by explaining the purpose of the taught strategy.
3	*How can the strategy be used?* Teachers should explicitly break down the strategies used while reading, using think-aloud techniques for example.
4	*When should the strategy be used?* Teachers should describe the appropriate circumstances under which the RCS is used. They also have to designate inappropriate instances for using the strategy.
5	*Where should the reader look?* Teachers should explicitly point out to students where in the text the strategy can be used. For example, the reader should read the first and last paragraphs of a passage and read the first sentence of each paragraph to understand what a text is going to be about.
6	*How can you evaluate the use of the strategy?* The teacher should schedule open discussions with the readers to verify whether the strategy is being used appropriately. The use of verbal think-aloud activities can facilitate to resolve remaining problems.

Table 2: Strategy instruction questions based on Winograd and Hare's model to be found in Anderson (1999)

What should be remembered is that the main objective of such an approach aims at developing students' autonomy. In this way, the explicit teaching of RCS connects with a teaching of strategies to allow the learners to make connections, think about what they read, and later, transfer the learning to new contexts (Giasson-Lachance, 1995; Mason et al., 2016).

Most often, critics of explicit teaching state that it can only be applied to the elementary school instruction level. Indeed, there are few studies concerning explicit teaching and older students. The fact that explicit instruction offers a lot of guidance from the teacher, while it is generally agreed that secondary-schools' students (especially at the higher level) are led to more and more autonomy, leads one to think that this teaching technique is only applicable at the beginning of the learning process. According to these ideas, the guidance of explicit teaching would fail in its main mission towards students by not letting them learn because it would not face them with real experiments' mistakes from which they could learn. Though this also came

[35] It should be noted that Anderson (1999) separates procedural knowledge into two distinct questions focusing on *when* and *where* while the original list of questions given by Winograd and Hare (1988) groups it together and includes only five questions.

out of the research of our Ph.D. interviewees, they realized as well that the explicit teaching of strategies attempts to equip students to be autonomous in the long term (see *Appendix F*). It is indeed necessary go through more guided teaching in the early stages of instruction and therefore less autonomy before making follow-up reminders to be useful in the future. Critics of explicit instruction also typically argue that students sit passively during the (P) stage and that following the steps of explicit teaching prevents the teacher to make the lesson dynamic and keep the students' attention; it rather routinizes it (Winograd & Hare, 1988). It is true that the first phase of explicit teaching requires students to listen and face the teacher, but when done well, this phase consists in questions and answers between the students and the teacher and results in interactive lessons (Gauthier et al., 2013). Furthermore, this (P) stage can become a habit at the beginning of each RC lesson. Research shows that implementing a few effective routines can make teaching/learning situations easier to manage (Gauthier et al., 2013). Using routines is thus not synonymous with monotony or repetitive and undiversified lessons; routines are used to save time in the completion of a number of tasks.

The interest in teaching RCS is thus not new and a lot of scholars support a pedagogical emphasis on RCS to develop the learner's autonomy (Anderson, 1999; Barnett, 1988; Mason et al., 2016; Pressley & Harris, 1990; Sood, 2015). In the end, even if there are critics against this method and it seems difficult to name a specific one for teaching strategies, some articles succeed in giving an appropriate guideline (Winograd & Hare, 1988). They all agree on the main aspect of an approach to RCS: whichever methods or approaches a teacher uses, they must lead to the development of a maximum of autonomy in students, i.e. enabling them to deal with new situations on their own (Bissonnette, 2015; Gauthier et al., 2013; Mason et al., 2016). They also state that the strategies must be integrated in a context, aiming at meeting the learner's needs, and adapted to the students' level to allow them to identify the positive impact on the task (Anderson, 1999; Gauthier et al., 2013; Giasson-Lachance, 1995; Kong, 2019; Mason et al., 2016; Pressley & Harris, 1990; Rosenshine, 1983). Furthermore, and as explained in detail in this section of my thesis, teaching RCS must be made explicit. Gauthier et al. (2013)'s PIC model, referring to the preparation of the strategy (P), the interaction with the students through explicit teaching (I), and the strengthening of the learned strategy (C) has been developed. An emphasis was given to the steps of explicit teaching, namely the modeling, guided practice and self-directed practice. Finally, it is opportune to note that while the teacher needs to be aware of the importance of teaching strategies explicitly, the students also need to be aware of their importance (FESeC, 2021). This awareness can indeed motivate them to use RCS and achieve better results (Anderson, 2004). On the whole, making RCS explicit has an impact on the students' comprehension of a text. Yet, this section leaves us with questions: Are teachers aware

of such teaching? Do the methods used in FL teaching nowadays emphasize explicit teaching of RCS? While the survey mentioned in the introduction of this paper and developed in the fifth chapter was created to attempt to answer this first question, the next section will try to answer the second one by looking at the place of RCS in the history of teaching methods.

2.2 The attitude towards comprehension strategies in the history of WBF teaching methods

In the context of this research, it seems important to dedicate a section of this work to the place that RCS have occupied in the history of different language teaching methods in the French-speaking part of Belgium to clarify how they have come to be taught in today's WBF FL classrooms. It should be noted that greater emphasis will be given to the place that RCS have occupied in the history of different language teaching methods rather than on the actual evolution of language teaching methods in general. Indeed, this section will mainly discuss the shift from, on the one hand, the audiolingual and audiovisual methods, which consider the learner as a receiver and a mere imitator of input (Simons, 2020a) to, on the other hand, the communicative approach and the action-oriented approach, which are based on *cognitivism* and *socioconstructivism*[36] and therefore logically emphasize the metacognitive side and the explicit teaching of RCS (Germain, 1993).[37] Much of the information used to write this overview of the WBF teaching history is based on Christian Puren's volume *Histoire des Méthodologies de l'Enseignement des Langues* (2012) and Claude Germain's book entitled *Le point sur l'approche communicative* (1993).

For a long time, FL teaching methods were based on *behaviorism*, i.e. the theory that learning is conditioned by observable reflexes that adapt to external conditions and is not influenced by the learner's thoughts (Puren, 2012).[38] As early as the 1930's, language learning was done in the USA using audio documents. The principle of the method consisted in the imitation and repetition of linguistics patterns (Heo, 2011). This was called the audio-oral or audio-lingual method (Puren, 2012).[39] In the 60's and early 70's this method came to be extensively used in Europe, integrated with visual stimuli, and was named the structuro-global-

[36] Both these theories tend to create active learners who aim at understanding the language and construct the meaning by assimilating through their own experience (Tardif, 1997).
[37] This idea of teaching strategies for using FL as a communication tool is also an important feature of the communicative approach and the actional perspective in use today in the education system of most European countries, including Belgium (Council of Europe, 2020; Germain, 1993).
[38] This definition is based on the explanation given in Fagnant's syllabus *Psychologie éducationnelle de l'adolescent et du jeune adulte: Syllabus interactif* (2020)
[39] Let us note that this method appeared with the needs of the American army, which had to train soldiers in English as fast as possible. That is why it is also called the army method (Puren, 2012).

audio-visual method (Puren, 2012). Its purpose was to focus on the everyday language via substitution drills or pattern drills exercises (Heo, 2011). According to the definition put forward by Puren (2012), both methods can be regrouped under the terminology of audio-visual methods (AVM). These methods declare that the learner manages to create meaning and acquire new performances by successive approximations on the basis of recordings and pictures (Heo, 2011; Puren, 2012). In other words, these methods were based on the principle that learners of a FL, could create automatic linguistic behaviors by imitating model sentences provided by native speakers. Mainly, they did not leave space for the use of RCS or their explicit teaching. As a result, teachers were required to avoid traps in the exercises to avoid the risk of mistakes assimilation. Puren (2012) writes that no particular strategy was proposed to understand the introduced linguistic forms and their spontaneous reuse and that, with these methods, the place of explicit teaching was almost reduced to nothing. Indeed, students were perceived as mere receiver of input they had to reproduce and little importance was given to the explanation of their reflections on learning and/or language since it was simply a matter of reproducing. Also, the teacher's voice was only a supplement to the course material and students had to deduce meaning on their own (Heo, 2011). These methods namely advocated what Simons calls 'l'auto-apprentissage' or self-learning (Simons, 2020a, p. 16). One of the main drawbacks of these methods was that, as Heo (2011) points out, the model sentences used were mainly stereotypical and differed significantly from what could be understood from a conversation between native speakers. Learners were therefore not able to transfer their knowledge to new situations, which paved the way for the following approaches to language teaching (Germain, 1993).

In the 1970's, due to the advent of different linguistic needs in an enlarged Europe and in reaction to previous methods, a new approach to language teaching emerged, i.e. the communicative approach (Germain, 1993; Savignon, 1991). Indeed, people realized they needed the FL to communicate in plausible everyday situations and AVM methods were criticized for neglecting the context of communication situations as well as the social aspects of language to stick to a purely theoretical conception of language (Germain, 1993). The focus of language teaching thus shifted from language itself, i.e. grammatical structures and vocabulary, to the construction of a communicative competence centered on the message formulated in terms of speech acts or language functions to which the lexicon and grammar were subordinated (Germain, 1993). Mainly, the communicative approach emphasized the functional aspect given to language teaching and aimed at getting learners, with the help of their teacher, to think about how they would function linguistically in new situations to make them independent (Germain, 1993). In this context, RC activities are seen as a continuous negotiation

and evaluation of meaning that paves the way to language for communication, i.e. one reads a text to understand it and discuss it with someone else. Those activities therefore had to be integrated in communicative tasks in which the explicit teaching of comprehension strategies was necessary (Savignon, 1991). Indeed, in his book, Germain (1993) insists on the importance attributed by this approach to considering strategies as tools that lead the learners to be active participants in their learning. In this perspective, mistakes were no longer seen as a risk, but as the manifestation of learning strategies. Learners of English who say *childs* instead of *children* show that they have understood that it is a matter of adding an *s* to form the plural; they show that they are making connections and thus reflecting on the language. However, it is the teacher's role to ensure that these errors are corrected and not assimilated as the correct way to speak the FL (Germain, 1993). Moreover, Savignon (1991) recommends that the learner knows how to use the functional language by means of skills, such as reactivating knowledge and verifying hypotheses. As those have earlier been identified as comprehension strategies (see *2.1.2 Reading comprehension strategies*), they make the link between the communicative approach and the importance of RCS. Furthermore, Germain (1993) adds that even though the teacher must master their subject, i.e. the language, they must also pay particular attention to the way learners proceed in the target language, i.e. the strategies they use. It is indeed because 'the teacher helps students to understand what they are learning and why they are learning it' that the communicative approach insists on explicit teaching (Pressley & Harris, 1990, p. 33). In other words, the communicative approach highlighted the necessity of RCS to enable learners to develop meaning but also the necessity for those to be taught explicitly.[40]

Since the beginning of the 2000s, and mainly after the publication of the CEFR, the Council of Europe decided to adopt 'an action-oriented approach' to language teaching (2001, p. 9). Rather similar to the previous communicative approach in the sense that it also emphasizes, among other things, explicit teaching of RCS to help the student understand the FL and become progressively autonomous in authentic situations, the action-oriented approach differs in its consideration of socio-cultural contexts in which the learner can use the FL (Puren, 2009). The CEFR indeed insists on the fact that users of a FL also use it to live together in our 'complex society' and 'to perform a job better, or to help with studies or to facilitate life in a foreign country' (Council of Europe, 2001, pp. 133, 136). Whereas the communicative approach tended to consider language useful only in travelling situations and trained learners accordingly, the action-oriented approach also aims at preparing students to talk about various subjects, including topics both personal and professional (Puren, 2009). Always with the aim

[40] It is important to note that strategies to be taught must be chosen adequately to meet students' needs and take their abilities into account (Giasson-Lachance, 1995; Kong, 2019).

of meeting the needs of the learner who may be confronted with the FL outside a school environment, it is on these new themes and authentic situations that current teaching is based. Regarding strategic teaching, the action-oriented approach highlights the learners' need for strategy instruction in that it goes beyond the teaching of individual strategies:

> The approach adopted here, generally speaking, is an action-oriented one in so far as it views users and learners of a language primarily as **'social agents'**, i.e. members of society **who have tasks** (not exclusively language-related) to accomplish in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment and within a particular field of action. (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 9)[41]

By seeing the learners as 'social agents', this approach does no longer teach strategies for their own sake, but with a goal in mind, i.e. to solve a communication task. Many texts also insist on the idea that students must be aware that a single strategic skill is insufficient and that only the combined use of RCS is effective in fully understanding a text (Alderson, 2005; Anderson, 1999; Barnett, 1988; Giasson-Lachance, 1995). Yet, in their first attempts at strategic teaching, teachers presented strategies out of context, one at a time, without connecting them to each other, and in application in targeted exercises rather than in actual texts related to other communicative tasks (Alderson, 2005). This could be a consequence of the very nature of the phrase *approach*. Indeed, an approach only offers guidelines to teachers but no methodology as such (Germain, 1993).[42] Savignon (1991) emphasizes, on the one hand, the satisfaction of some teachers who see this as an opportunity to develop their own material and feel more comfortable with global guidelines. On the other hand, the lack of clarity on how to teach in the classroom can be disturbing for young teachers and result in frustration or inappropriate methods as the one mentioned above (Pressley & Harris, 1990; Savignon, 1991). The methodological approaches presented in the fifth chapter of this paper aim at meeting this particular need.

With this clarification of the various language teaching methods suggested over the years, it is now possible to better understand where the main principles of the current FL teaching method come from. This section of my thesis thus focuses on the main shift in language learning and teaching methods from seeing learners as passive receivers and imitators of linguistic models to active thinkers and meaning-makers. Accordingly, this section makes the connection with the monitoring strategy giving importance to metacognition and the awareness of strategies, which is highlighted in most of the research carried out on RCS. Indeed, while it is very important to teach reading strategies, it is equally important to make students

[41] The bold print has been added to emphasize the idea of this paragraph.
[42] Simons also identifies a 'flou artistique' around the methods (2020a).

aware of them in order to achieve better results (Mason et al., 2016; Pearson et al., 1990). The following section will aim at highlighting other conclusions that previous researches have drawn from the explicit teaching of RCS.

2.3 The explicit teaching of comprehension strategies: Pros and cons

There has been a great deal of research on explicit strategy instruction, and each has drawn its own conclusions. There are, however, some major conclusions that emerge from many of the studies. It is these major conclusions in particular that will be outlined in this section.

First, research has shown that explicit RCS teaching confers effective and positive results on students' reading skills, particularly memory and comprehension (Block, 1986; Hagaman et al., 2010; Pearson et al., 1990; Pressley & Harris, 1990). Yet, the cause of such an improvement is difficult to evaluate. Indeed, during the interview with the two Ph.D. students, one of our respondents states:

> C'est impossible de montrer que c'est grâce aux stratégies [que les élèves] se sont améliorés. Mais l'anxiété langagière reste quand même une problématique qui empêche les élèves d'évoluer. Donc, si on parvient à montrer que [l'enseignement des stratégies] a un impact sur le psychologique, normalement, en toute logique, ça devrait avoir un impact sur les résultats. (*Appendix F*)

Hence, the cause for such a progress is not necessarily the automatic and spontaneous reuse of strategies because students' performance also varies as a result of other factors, such as background knowledge, motivation, frequency, the characteristics of the text, or the context of reading (Alderson, 2005). Then, the results of the research conducted in the framework of RCS to evaluate the stability over time of such an instruction must be counterbalanced because the purpose of the tests administered, which influenced the reading process, was artificial (Alderson, 2005). Therefore, it raises questions about their possible generalization. In other words, the students that were tested knew they were tested on strategies as they had most of the time been taught RCS right before the test. For obvious reasons, this could have influenced their use of these strategies for the test. Even though it is generally accepted that students learn and use what they are taught, some researchers likewise draw puzzling conclusions and insist that explicit instruction of the strategies do not necessarily influence their use by the students who are taught them (Barnett, 1988; Pearson et al., 1990). It is thus not always necessary to go through systematic teaching of all strategies as many students would use strategies that are not adapted to them nor to the reading task (Barnett, 1988; Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). It has been proven that mastering long lists of strategies is, in fact, ineffective and that, in order for students to achieve better reading skills, it is the teacher's role to choose the adequate strategies to

explain (Anderson, 1999; Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Pearson et al., 1990). Similarly, scholars are inclined to insist on students' positive outcomes achieved with teacher-guided effective explicit strategic teaching that makes cognitive processes transparent to all:

> Les élèves habiles découvriront, certes, par eux-mêmes des stratégies efficaces de lecture ; cependant, si on laisse ces découvertes sous la seule responsabilité des élèves, on risque d'agrandir l'écart entre les élèves forts et les élèves faibles, d'où l'intérêt de l'enseignement stratégique. (Giasson-Lachance, 1995, p. 68)

On that account, the explicit teaching of strategies serves comprehension and can only help in showing aspects of the text that have gone unnoticed (Giasson-Lachance, 1995). Nevertheless, researchers admit that involving students in manipulating RC in greater quantities can still have a positive impact on their reading ability and results (Anderson, 1999; Barnett, 1988; Tollefson, 2006). Besides, achieving better results and understanding of a text allows students to acquire effective writing skills and therefore to better situate reading activities in the context (Pressley & Harris, 1990).

Secondly, research on strategic instruction has shown that it has positive results on students' motivation to engage in the reading task (Anderson, 1999, 2004; Hoover & Gough, 1990; Pearson et al., 1990). Indeed, the explicit teaching of strategies impacts students feeling of proficiency when taught effectively and appropriately in regard to the reading situation. Some research adds that it is especially important to teach students to distinguish the conditions, i.e. the procedural knowledge, under which they need one or another strategy (Anderson, 2004; Carrell, 1989; Carrell et al., 1998; Hattie, 2010). Teaching only the useful strategies that apply to the task affects the perceived effectiveness of these strategies and thus text comprehension (Barnett, 1988; Carrell et al., 1989, 1998; Goodman, 1988). This gain in comprehension is then even more evident when students are aware of their strategy use (Anderson, 2004; Carrell, 1989; Pearson et al., 1990). This is why metacognition must be advocated. Indeed,

> Plus il y aura d'échanges et de mises en commun, de clarifications et d'explicitations, plus il y aura d'opportunités pour l'apprenant de découvrir et d'intégrer des stratégies qui lui sont véritablement utiles. (FESeC, 2021)

In this case, a lot of studies agree to say that the use of think-aloud processes really help in the motivation of students (Anderson, 1999, 2004; Barnett, 1988; Block, 1992). Indeed, they do not always realize that good readers can be struggling too. So, taking a few minutes with them to show how one is pausing, asking questions, thinking about information, etc, can be motivating. Still, some students might not be 'highly verbal' and it can be difficult for them to report their thoughts orally (Alderson, 2005, p. 334). Think-aloud process could therefore bring an additional difficulty that teachers have to be aware of. However, an alternative to this

negative point might be to suggest to students who are not highly verbal that they draw a diagram to describe this process for example.

Finally, the negative point of the explicit teaching of RCS remains its tendency to take time in the classroom (Alderson, 2005; Simons & Beckers, 1999). Strategy instruction is something that many teachers think of as being the solution to everything as if all they needed to do was to teach students good strategies in order to make them become good readers (Duffy et al., 1987). Therefore, studies have shown that too much instructional time sometimes ends up being spent at getting good at the level of strategies instead of actually reading the text. Those studies state that there is a necessity to reconsider the use of strategy instruction, remembering that explicit strategy instruction must consist in making RCS visible in order for them to go away again, i.e. in order for students to use them independently later on (Giasson-Lachance, 1995).[43] Strategies have to be considered as temporary structures that can help one learn a way to actively process reading, and their teaching should not consist in giving students more work to do (Alderson, 2005; Duffy et al., 1987). On the other hand, integrating strategies in RC teaching, most of the time, gives structure to the reading lesson content and helps to guide students in their learning (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). Strategies thus make reading instruction more effective when students are aware of it, but should not be the focus of the lesson.

In conclusion, even if the negative point of strategy teaching is its time-consuming nature, the good results achieved after such teaching counterbalance this negative point. In addition, students from all age can benefit from explicit teaching of strategies if this teaching is carried out in an effective and appropriate manner (Pearson et al., 1990).

2.4 Towards an operational definition of reading comprehension strategies

With the previous theory in mind, I would now like to elaborate an operational definition of RCS that will guide the following pages of this MA thesis. This section of my dissertation aims at answering the following questions:

(1a)	What are reading comprehension strategies?
(1b)	What does the explicit teaching of reading comprehension strategies consists in?

From the beginning of the questionnaire briefly mentioned in the introduction,[44] respondents were confronted, with my operational and personal definition of RCS, with which

[43] See *2.1.2 Reading comprehension strategies* p. 26 (T in the ACTIVE model).
[44] For a further analysis of this questionnaire and its results see *5. Questionnaire on the use of comprehension strategies in Wallonia Brussel Federation's classrooms*.

they could agree or disagree. Indeed, as will be mentioned later (see *4.1.1 Questionnaire design*), this choice was made in order to avoid people answering the questionnaire with different conceptions of the term RCS, which would have strongly biased the results of the survey. The table in *Appendix C* represents this definition. To elaborate this definition, I had not done as much reading as I have at this point of my writing process. I can thus now say that it deserves some modifications.

First, this definition should emphasize the goals of explicitly teaching RCS as follows:

RCS are **deliberate or unconscious actions** taken by the student **to monitor and make sense of a text as a whole and the words it contains**. The purpose of RCS is primarily to motivate students by making them aware of their effectiveness and their control over the reading task. Then, RCS should always be taught with the goal of helping students achieve better reading skills and thus better outcomes in RC. In no way should this instruction consist in work overload. Therefore, the strategies taught must always be chosen in relation to the purpose of the task and the student's skills and abilities. Finally, the explicit teaching of RCS must aim at making students active in their learning, on the one hand, by equipping them and allowing them to carry out small tasks that will help in the understanding of texts, and, on the other hand, by making metacognitive processes visible. Making these processes visible should be **taught by going through the stages of explicit teaching.** The teacher has to aim at showing what the strategy is, why it should be learned, how and when it can be used, where to look to apply the strategy, and how to evaluate one's efficiency.

Then, this definition should be made more operational by providing a kind of recipe for teaching the strategies in the classroom in the following way:[45]

If applicable to the reading task at hand and in accordance with students' skills, teachers should train students to perform the following strategies to answer to the task at hand:

(1) Plan one's reading by thinking *ahead*

a. Call up topical knowledge and make connections between the students' knowledge and new information in the text by inviting them to ask questions.
b. Identify the main function of the text by paying attention to text genre.
c. Identify key words, pictures, connectors, or (sub)titles.
d. *Write down* hypotheses predicted on the previous strategies.
e. Mark the purpose of the reading task to know what to look for while reading the text.

[45] There are lots of RCS and many exercises to train them. This MA thesis therefore does not claim to provide a complete and accurate list of all the strategies that can be applied in RC of a FL text. However, it attempts to provide a fairly inclusive list of the main strategies discussed in the literature of the preceding sections.

(2) Monitor comprehension, i.e. regulate by establishing control over it, *during* the reading activity

a. Skim a passage (read over the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully to infer new information or read between the lines of the text.
b. Predict the content of an upcoming passage or section of the text based on pictures, style, and connectors.
c. Determine the importance of the different elements of the text and be able to put aside less significant details in favor of the essential information.
d. Guess the meaning of unfamiliar words or phrases based on their context or their etymology, or what one already knows in FL.
e. Picture or draw information (in one's mind or on paper) to build a representation of the written text.
f. Distinguish between author-determined and reader-determined important information to question the text about its content, the author's intention, the events, the issues, and the ideas developed to test them against common sense and background knowledge.

(3) Evaluate and check strategies and efficiency *afterwards*

a. Verify hypotheses by re-reading difficult passages to repair misinterpretations made when predicting.
b. Evaluate comprehension to review or modify one's schematization of the related ideas in the text.
c. Summarize, i.e. paraphrase the text with the help of previous strategies.
d. Talk with pairs/classmates to evaluate the efficiency of strategies employed (think aloud processes) and repair misunderstandings.
e. Evaluate what one has learned with the text.

Finally, this operational definition should outline that strategies are an important part of the reading process and that they serve RC as follows:

A better understanding of RCS is important because it can help make the **connection between** different characteristics of the reading process: **(1) the reader**, **(2)** how they **comprehend**, **(3)** how they manage their **interaction with the text**, and **(4)** how their choice of strategies influences **the context** of the text or reading activity. These connections enhance the students' reading skills.

I do not want to suggest that the definition addressed in this chapter is the only interpretation to consider when thinking about RCS explicit teaching. However, it is central to my research and can be considered as a sort of conclusion to this theoretical framework. It also serves as a launching point for the elaboration of my personal course activity in the 5th chapter (see *5. Final methodological approaches for the teaching of reading comprehension strategies*). It is not important that the readers of this thesis agree with the way I see the explicit teaching of RCS but rather that they keep this definition in mind when reading my MA thesis.

3 COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES IN OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS AND LEGAL REQUIREMENTS OF THE WALLONIA-BRUSSELS FEDERATION

If the learning and teaching of RCS are to be found in the scientific literature, the emphasis on the strategic approach to language teaching should also be found in official WBF documents. The present chapter aims at understanding the position of RCS in the teaching of FL in the secondary schools of Belgium's French-speaking community. It will investigate whether the official documents and legal requirements of the WBF recommend that teachers address RCS and if they are instructed to do so in an explicit way. A first section will attempt to outline the conditions of FL teaching in the WBF today as well as the functioning of the Belgian educational system. The second section of this chapter will then look at the status of RCS explicit teaching in important documents of the French-speaking part of Belgium: the CEFR and the frameworks and curricula of the WBF. Ultimately, this chapter will also consider the importance given to strategic instruction in the legal requirements describing the ongoing training given to WBF FL teachers. The results of the analyses conducted in this chapter aim at getting the answers to the following research questions:

(2a)	Is the notion of comprehension strategies included in the CEFR?
(2b)	If so, is an explicit teaching recommended?
(3a)	Is the notion of comprehension strategies included in the reference papers and curricula of the WBF?
(3b)	If so, is an explicit teaching recommended?
(4)	Are there any differences in the different school networks' approach to the explicit teaching of comprehension strategies?[46]
(5)	Is the teaching of comprehension strategies included in secondary-school foreign language teachers of the WBF's ongoing training?

On the basis of the several conclusions drawn from the previous chapter of this dissertation, several hypotheses will be formulated and presented at the beginning of each section. It should also be noted that for each research question a null hypothesis will also be made.

3.1 General outline

In Belgium, the educational system is organized by school networks. The Belgian French-speaking education organization is divided into two main school networks: the Official one and

[46] Only private, paying and non-subsidized schools are not part of these networks. They will not be considered in this MA thesis.

the Free one. While the official education system is fully subsidized by the state, the free education system is partly funded by the state and managed by non-profit organizations or independent organizing authorities. In the first one we also distinguish between schools organized directly by the WBF and schools managed by the communes and provinces. The schools of the free network are said to be confessional when they are linked to religious groups, or non-confessional when they tend towards non-religious pedagogies.[47] The functioning of the two networks is similar. There are official documents of reference, common to all, issued by the WBF, from which each network creates its own programs. Teachers then develop their lessons based on the pedagogical contents and guidelines that can be found in these programs. At the end of the year, teacher also usually design exams. As these are based on the taught contents, themselves based on the official documents of the WBF, and given that Belgium is a European country, end-of-year exams are also developed in each language according to the levels of competence suggested by the CEFR. The CEFR distinguishes six levels of proficiency, which 'can be grouped into three broad categories: Basic user (A1 and A2), Independent user (B1 and B2) and Proficient user (C1 and C2)' (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 36). By the end of their upper-secondary education, students are expected to have achieved a B2(-) level in LM1, a B1(-) level in LM2, and a A2(+) level in LM3.[48] Let us note that these levels concern Germanic languages and that the levels to be reached in Romance languages are slightly higher, i.e. a B2(-) level in LM2, and a B1(-) level in LM3. Before analyzing the curricula concerning FL in the different school networks, this thesis will first look into the occurrences of strategic teaching in the CEFR, considering that the reference papers issued by the WBF should follow the guidelines of this book.

3.2 Comprehension strategies in the Common European Framework of Reference for languages

Since its publication in 2001, the CEFR has had a strong influence on the educational policies of European countries in the field of language teaching (Simons, 2020b). Indeed, it 'provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum, guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe' (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 1). It is therefore relevant to look for the mention of RCS (or words that are related to them) in this book. In this sense, the following hypotheses can be put forward:

[47] The free schools in the Belgian French community are mainly confessional and Catholic.
[48] All the levels stated in this MA thesis relate to RC because it is the core competence of the topic of this work.

$H_{2a.0}$ ***The CEFR does not mention RCS in the teaching of FL.***

$H_{2a.1}$ ***Due to their existence and the demonstration of their use by language users in the scientific literature, the CEFR mentions RCS in the teaching of FL.***

Then, if RCS are mentioned, the context in which the terms are mentioned will have to be looked at more closely to find out whether their explicit teaching is advised by the Council of Europe. In that respect, the following hypotheses are formulated:

$H_{2b.1}$ ***The CEFR does not advise any particular form of RCS teaching.***

$H_{2b.2}$ ***The CEFR advises the explicit teaching of RCS.***

Since its first publication in 2001, two renewed volumes of the CEFR have been published (Council of Europe, 2018, 2020). These two documents described by their authors as complements to the 2001 CEFR focused on 'highlighting certain innovative areas of the CEFR […] which have become increasingly relevant over the past twenty years' (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 23), will also be looked into to discover if or to what extent the perception of or emphasis on RCS has changed over the years.

When searching for the occurrences of the stem *strateg-* in the 2001 CEFR, one finds that the strategic component of FL learning is not unknown to the Council of Europe. In fact, they use the word strategies (or a term related to it) 121 times out of 196 pages.[49] By searching for this stem, this research reveals

- 109 occurrences of the word *strategies*;[50]
- 6 occurrences of the word *strategic*;
- 5 occurrences of the word *strategy*;
- 1 occurrences of the word *strategically* in the original book.

Both companion volumes, published in 2018 and 2020, also seem to be familiar with the strategic component. Indeed, as with the original CEFR, they each mention the stem *strateg-* 80 times. The research in the 152-page[49] 2018 edition and in the 159-page[49] 2020 version reveals

- 71 occurrences of the word *strategies*;
- 5 occurrences of the word *strategy*;
- 4 occurrences of the word *strategic* in each volume.

[49] This page number excludes tables of contents, bibliographies, and appendices.
[50] Occurrences where the term is used in the common sense of the word have not been taken into account.

This quantitative analysis is summarized in the following table:

	CEFR		
	2001	2018	2020
ABSOLUTE FREQUENCY (N_{occ}/N_p)	**121**/196	**80**/152	**80**/159
RELATIVE FREQUENCY	**61.7%**	**52.6%**	**50.3%**

$N_{occ}/N_p = N_{occurrences}/N_{pages}$

Table 3: Overall frequency of the stem strateg- in the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001, 2018, 2020)

Undeniably this allow us to note that there is a slight decrease in the use of the term over the years. This suggests that the strategic component of language learning and teaching was already present in the original document and that over time, it has just become more specific to remain important in the eyes of the Council of Europe as the authors do not add much material on this subject. In addition, this analysis highlights a greater use of the term *strategies* in the plural, which could reinforce and confirm the idea that strategies function as a whole in relation to each other (see *2.1.2 Reading comprehension strategies* pp. 29-30).

Still, as mentioned in the theoretical framework of this dissertation, strategies do not only apply to RC but can also be activated during listening, productive, interactive, and mediative language communication activities (see *2.1.2 Reading comprehension strategies* pp.18-19). Therefore, only some of these occurrences are specifically relevant to this research because they are directly referring to RCS. I thus researched the phrase *reception strategy/ies* (i.e. specific to receptive skills) in regards to RC. Then, as RCS also concern the monitoring of an activity, the mention of *metacognition* was investigated. *Table 4* below represents the CEFR page numbers where these words can be found. The bold print indicates when the term is used twice on the same page. The low relative frequency of the phrase *reception strategies* seems to highlight a limited importance given to RCS in the book. Indeed, of the 121 occurrences initially observed in the 2001 CEFR, only 7 concern RCS; this represents 5.8%. The same observation can be made when considering that only 7.5% (6 out of 80) of the occurrences observed in the companion volumes are dedicated to RCS. Let us note that the CEFR authors do not use any other phrase to refer to RCS either.

2001	**RECEPTION STRATEGIES**	p. 65, **p. 72**, p. 73, **p. 84**, p. 166
	SUBTOTAL:	7 times/196 pages
	METACOGNITION	p. 57 (metacognitive principles), p. 92 (mental monitoring activities), p. 134 (metacognitive strategies), p. 174 (metacognitive control)
	SUBTOTAL:	4 times/196 pages
	TOTAL:	**11 occurrences/196 pages**
	RELATIVE FREQUENCY:	5.6%
2018	**RECEPTION STRATEGIES**	p. 30, p. 33, p. 46, p. 54, **p. 67**
	SUBTOTAL:	6 times/152 pages
	METACOGNITION	no mention found
	TOTAL:	**6 occurrences/152 pages**
	RELATIVE FREQUENCY:	3.9%
2020	**RECEPTION STRATEGIES**	p. 25, p. 34, p. 37, p. 49, **p. 59**
	SUBTOTAL:	6 times/159 pages
	METACOGNITION	no mention found
	TOTAL:	**6 occurrences/159 pages**
	RELATIVE FREQUENCY:	3.8%

Table 4: Occurrences of the terms 'reception strategies' and 'metacognition' in the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001, 2018, 2020)[51]

Following this quantitative research, it is also interesting to investigate where these terms are found in the CEFR and what is said about them. It is in Section 4.4. of the original CEFR devoted to receptive activities and their strategies that most occurrences of the phrase *reception strategies* are found. In all the versions of the book, this section consists in, first, giving examples of receptive language communication activities, including visual reception, i.e. reading. The 2018 and 2020 companions have been slightly improved to include a definition and a graph of receptive activities. The 2020 companion volume was also further supplemented by signed reading. Then, the part dedicated to RC provides the reader with illustrative tables clarifying what language users can do at the different levels of language proficiency (these can be found in *Appendix D*). Interestingly enough, there is no explicit mention of RCS for any of the levels in these tables. The occurrences of the term in *Table 4* above concern the mention of the word *strategies* in the title or the graph of the section. Even though the 2018 and 2020 tables

[51] This representation is inspired from Simons (2020b, p. 144).

have been modified, it is interesting to note that they still do not mention RCS.[52] However, some of the terms used in the section on receptive activities (either in the original CEFR or in the companion volumes) are similar to those used and defined as strategies in this dissertation (see *2.1.2 Reading comprehension strategies*). Indeed, as can be observed in *Appendix D*, the CEFR mentions monitoring, inferring, and the making and testing of hypotheses. It also echoes the activation of background knowledge when stating that a B1 reader 'can read straightforward factual texts on subjects related to his/her field and interests with a satisfactory level of comprehension' (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 60). The book also mentions skimming and scanning, or the ability to locate and distinguish details from relevant information. It further points out the ability to evaluate one's progress in rereading parts of text to improve comprehension and makes a reference to visual support, which low-level readers can use to help them understand the text they are reading. Furthermore, this section of the CEFR mentions the knowledge of vocabulary for most language users at the different levels. Though only from the 2018 version onwards, it also mentions the ability to deduce that vocabulary from context or based on etymology, as was highlighted in this MA thesis (see *2.1.2 Reading comprehension strategies* pp. 23-24). In addition, as in this work's theoretical framework, the CEFR authors point out the importance of addressing a particular category of reading as a 'mixture between reading purpose and reading particular genres with specific functions' (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 60). This point is particularly prominent in the companion volumes. Ultimately, the CEFR highlights the necessity for FL readers to consider the purpose and physical context of the reading task as follows:

> Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:
>
> • for what purposes the learner will need, or wish/be equipped/be required to read;
> • in which modes the learner will need or wish/be equipped/be required to read.
> (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 71)

In this sense, they make a noteworthy link with what has been said in the theoretical framework of this dissertation.

Further on, the phrase *receptive strategies* is shortly defined and illustrated with a scale[53] of what language users have to be able to do on each level in relation to all reception activities, i.e. this subsection concerns listening comprehension, audio-visual comprehension as well as RC. First, dedicating a portion of the CEFR to strategies reflects that the authors admit that RC

[52] An illustrative table intitled *Reading as a leisure activity* has been added as well as some detailed sentences in the other tables.

[53] Interestingly enough, this scale is entitled *Identifying cues and Inferring*, terms that have been identified as strategies in their own right in this essay. This may call into question the identification of other strategies cited in this paper.

might be linked to the use of strategies. Yet, this might also lead to assume that the authors either admit that the readers already know which strategies are specifically used during RC and what they refer to in the context of FL teaching and learning, or consider that RCS are no different than the ones used during any other receptive language activities. As highlighted by one of our interviewees (see *Appendix F*), part of this assumption can actually be true as some strategies apply to other receptive skills. Secondly, this definition comes very close to this work's operational definition of RCS (see *2.4 Towards an operational definition of reading comprehension strategies*). It indeed mentions a first 'Planning' phase, framing the input received on the basis of appropriate schemata, a second 'Execution' phase, consisting in inferring the meaning of the text based on the identification of clues, and lastly, the last 'Evaluation' and 'Repair' phases in which the language user has to test the hypotheses made as well as revise them. These mentions are similar to my definition containing the key words *ahead*, *during*, and *afterwards* (see *2.4 Towards an operational definition of reading comprehension strategies*). These phases also come close to what has been described as Gauthier et al.'s PIC model (see *2.1.3 Explicit teaching*). Moreover, the modifications addressed in the 2018 and 2020 companion volumes elaborate on this definition and, in doing so, emphasize the strategic component as defined in this MA thesis. Indeed, the CEFR authors find it important to highlight what they consider key concepts in the modified illustration scale. First, they stress the ability to exploit illustrations, headings, subtitles, and the position of the information in the text as important points attesting to the reception proficiency of certain levels of language. It is noteworthy to state that these points have also been stated in the theoretical framework of this paper when elaborating on the skimming and scanning techniques (see *2.1.2 Reading comprehension strategies* pp. 26-27). Secondly, the CEFR authors state that receptive strategies also involve being able to deduce meaning from the co-text and linguistic context. The authors namely emphasize vocabulary acquisition with the ability of the learners of some language levels to achieve comprehension using context or subject knowledge, therefore again making the link with this dissertation's theoretical framework. Lastly, they underline the importance of exploiting linguistic clues, such as proper nouns, word roots, prefixes and suffixes, which have been identified as the cultivation of vocabulary or the word-mapping strategy in this MA thesis (see *2.1.2 Reading comprehension strategies*). It is important to note that, the CEFR also seems to find it important to consider temporal and logical connectors when attempting to comprehend a text (whether it is oral or written). This idea has also been defined as a RCS in this dissertation.

Nonetheless, the authors of the original document do not seem to give examples of all the strategies that have been identified in the theoretical part of this work (see *2.1.2 Reading*

comprehension strategies). Indeed, strategies such as the ability to synthesize information or to represent it in a visual diagram are not illustrated nor mentioned. It is also important to note that the CEFR remains very vague on the subject of RCS when stating that language users use 'a variety of strategies' (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 59). Ultimately, most of what has been identified as RCS in this MA thesis is not explicitly cited as strategies. This might lead to conclude that the Council of Europe wants to stay cautious because, as mentioned in this work, the identification of strategies is not an easy task (see *2.1.2 Reading comprehension strategies*). Still, the CEFR authors seem to consider what has been identified as strategies in this dissertation as components of receptive activities, such as RC, and as tools that can be used by FL speakers to facilitate the process. Indeed, a section of the original document that deals with conditions and constraints affecting the difficulty of language communication tasks mentions the efficiency of *receptive strategies* as follows:

> The time allowed for the response may be varied so as to decrease or increase task difficulty. The more time a listener or reader has to replay or reread a text, the more he or she is likely to understand and the greater the opportunity to apply a range of strategies for coping with difficulties in understanding the text. (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 166)

Hence, it emphasizes the possibility of using strategies to resolve difficult receptive tasks. Consequently, this highlights the positive opinion of the CEFR members regarding receptive strategies.

Not only does *Table 4* above allow us to witness the preceding observations, it also highlights the absence of the term *metacognition* in the companion volumes. Still, this does not reflect a lack of interest in the language learner's reflection. On the contrary, the initial presence of the term metacognition in a section entitled 'What is it that learners have to learn or acquire?' in the 2001 document proves that the Council of Europe even advocates an explicit teaching of metacognition (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 131). Plus, as 'it is important to note that the additions [of information in the companion volumes] do not impact on the construct described in the CEFR' (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 22) and that the companion volumes serve 'to complement the original illustrative scales . . . in the body of the CEFR text' (Council of Europe, 2018, pp. 21–22), the absence of the term in the 2018 and 2020 companion volumes should not be taken as an indication that the concept has been abandoned. It can thus be assumed that the authors still agree with this initial opinion but did not deem it necessary to address the issue further because they probably felt it was sufficiently developed in the original version. It is therefore interesting to further analyze what is being said when the term metacognition is mentioned. The 2001 CEFR mentions the word only four times in the context of RC (or

reception skills). However, as stated before, all mentions emphasize the importance of rendering the metacognitive processes of learning explicit to the users of the FL to achieve a better comprehension and become autonomous language users. The following table summarizes the contexts in which the mentions of metacognition can be found:

PAGES	QUOTES
57	The use of communication **strategies** can be seen as the application of the **metacognitive principles**: Pre-planning, Execution, Monitoring, and Repair Action to the different kinds of communicative activity: Reception, Interaction, Production and Mediation.
92	The **strategic component** deals with updating of **mental activities** and competences in the course of communication. This applies equally to the productive and receptive processes. It should be noted that an important factor in the control of the productive processes is the feedback the speaker/writer receives at each stage: formulation, articulation and acoustic. In a wider sense, the **strategic component** is also concerned with the **monitoring** of the communicative process as it proceeds, and with ways of managing the process accordingly.
134	Plurilingual and pluricultural competence also promotes the development of linguistic and communication awareness, and even **metacognitive strategies** which enable the social agent to become more aware of and control his or her own 'spontaneous' ways of handling tasks and in particular their linguistic dimension.
173-174	To these brief indications it may be added that in all cases time should be allowed at some point or other, in the case of all languages, for considering the approaches and learning paths to which learners, in their respective development, are exposed or for which they opt. This implies building into curriculum design at school scope for **explicitness**, the progressive development of **'learning awareness'** and the introduction of general language education which helps learners establish **metacognitive control** over their own competences and **strategies**. Learners situate these in relation to other possible competences and **strategies** and with regard to the language activities in which they are applied in order to accomplish tasks within specific domains.

Table 5: Summary of the occurrences of explicit awareness of strategies and metacognition in the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001)[51]

These sentences all relate to the theoretical framework of this MA thesis. To begin with, and as already mentioned, the CEFR emphasizes the importance of reflecting on comprehension through the use of strategies all along the FL activity as does the operational definition given in the first chapter (see *2.4 Towards an operational definition of reading comprehension strategies*). Then, when writing about the *strategic component* on page 92, the CEFR authors especially emphasize the teacher's role in an instructional context and the importance of feedback. Though this is especially the case for productive activities, language users also ought to use strategies during receptive tasks. In addition, the CEFR insists on the correction of language users throughout the language activity. In this sense the book echoes Gauthier et al. (2013)'s three stages of explicit teaching, i.e. the planning one, the interactive one, and the strengthening one (see *2.1.3 Explicit teaching*). The quote on page 173-174 is noteworthy, i.e. it is the only one to explicitly mention metacognition and explicitness. The book highlights the importance of explicit teaching to make the FL learners use the language on their own.

It is important to note that, similarly, when the stem *strateg-* is found in the CEFR, it is often used in direct relation to the improvement of language skills and, on few occasions, their explicit teaching is also supported. Indeed, the authors express their vision of strategies and their place in FL communication and learning as follows:

> Communication and learning involve the performance of tasks which are not solely language tasks even though they involve language activities and make demands upon the individual's communicative competence. To the extent that these tasks are neither routine nor automatic, they require the use of strategies in communicating and learning. (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 15)

Hence, strategies have to be explicitly activated to make language users conscious of their effectiveness. Moreover, the CEFR authors insist on the importance of mobilizing these strategies according to the needs of the learners as follows:

> Statements of the aims and objectives of language learning and teaching should be based on an appreciation of the needs of learners and of society, on the tasks, activities and processes that the learners need to carry out in order to satisfy those needs, and on the competences and strategies they need to develop/build up in order to do so. (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 131)

The authors further insist on developing strategies to enable learners to achieve a certain autonomy in their use of the language in communicative situations too.

> However, once teaching stops, further learning has to be autonomous. Autonomous learning can be promoted if 'learning to learn' is regarded as an integral part of language learning, so that learners become increasingly aware of the way they learn, the options open to them and the options that best suit them. (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 141)

This also makes the link with what was cited in the theoretical framework of this work. The CEFR thus gives the impression of insisting on the use of metacognition (albeit in few instances) and the importance of rendering it explicit to FL users in order to make them autonomous communicators, even beyond their learning in the classroom.

In general, strategies are seen, throughout the CEFR, as tools that can facilitate FL communication if they, and the metacognitive process related to them, are made explicit. Indeed, the CEFR states that 'communicative language strategies are thus seen in the CEFR as a kind of hinge between communicative language competence and communicative language activities' (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 33). It also emphasizes that strategies facilitate FL users' learning awareness. Thus, as already stated in the theoretical framework of this MA thesis, the interrelation of this learning awareness with language users' communicative competence makes sure the latter will also be facilitated.

In conclusion, these observations lead us to positively answer question 2**a** (*Is the notion of comprehension strategies included in the CEFR?)*; yes, the CEFR includes the notion of strategies thus confirming $\boldsymbol{H_{2a.1}}$ made at the beginning of this section. Concerning the answer to question 2**b** (*If so, is an explicit teaching recommended?)*, this section of my dissertation highlights that, though in few instances, the focus of the CEFR is to render strategies explicit. Therefore, it positively answers this question as well and confirms $\boldsymbol{H_{2b.2}}$. Consequently, RCS, identified as tools in the theoretical framework of this MA thesis, and their explicit teaching, should also be included in the curricula that give guidelines concerning what is to be taught to students of the French-speaking region of Belgium. To find out if they are equally important in the WBF reference papers, the following section will analyze the reference papers common to all school networks as well as the curricula specific to each network of education.

3.3 Comprehension strategies in reference papers and curricula of the Wallonia Brussel Federation

As RCS are important in the CEFR, it will be interesting to find out if they are equally important in the WBF reference papers and curricula, which should in theory follow the CEFR guidelines. In this sense, the following hypotheses can be put forward:

$\boldsymbol{H_{3a.0}}$	***Despite their mention in the CEFR, the WBF reference papers and curricula do not refer to RCS.***
$\boldsymbol{H_{3a.1}}$	***As they are mentioned in the CEFR, the WBF reference papers and curricula also include RCS.***

Then, as the CEFR advocates the explicit teaching of RCS, it seems logical to assume that if the reference documents mention RCS, they recommend their explicit teaching too. In that respect, the following hypotheses are formulated:

$\boldsymbol{H_{3b.1}}$	***The WBF reference papers and curricula do not advise any particular form of RCS teaching.***
$\boldsymbol{H_{3b.2}}$	***The WBF reference papers and curricula advise the explicit teaching of RCS.***

3.3.1 Reference papers common to all networks of education

In the WBF, several reference frameworks for FL instruction in secondary schools are being used: the *Socles de compétences – Langues modernes* and the *Compétences terminales et savoirs requis*. The former defines the aims at the completion of fundamental education and the

first common degree, while the latter[54] describes the learning skills and knowledge to be mastered by the end of the sixth (or seventh) grade of secondary school. Although some of the legal documents are also issued in English, only the French versions are legally valid, hence the analysis of the WBF official documents will be undertaken in these French versions. These new reference frameworks from 2017 will be completely implemented in secondary education at the beginning of the academic year 2021-2022. However, this section will also look at the previous frameworks of reference from 1999 and 2000 in order to establish a comparison over time.

As with the CEFR, I have researched the occurrences of the notions of strategies and metacognition in these documents, which are represented in *Table 6*. Interestingly, more occurrences are found in the new reference frameworks than in the old ones. Indeed, as 'the process of developing frameworks and programs in the WBF allows for alignment with the strategic objectives set out in the Décret Missions',[55] the emphasis is placed, among other things, on strategies 'to develop beings capable of thinking for themselves and acting freely'[56] (Fédération Wallonie Bruxelles, 2015, pp. 10, 5). This inevitably increases the number of term occurrences. Moreover, the high relative frequencies in the new frameworks highlight a greater importance of the terms than in the CEFR. In addition, the metacognitive dimension is also referred to in these latest reference frameworks since the research in the document reveals occurrences of the French stem *méta-*.[57] Two references to a *méta*level or *méta*capacity are also to be found in the foreword of all the documents from 2017 but those were not accounted for.

[54] There are two versions of this document: one valid for the *enseignement de transition*, the other valid for the *enseignement de qualification*. Both versions will be analyzed in this MA thesis.
[55] Original quote: 'Le processus d'élaboration des référentiels et programmes en FWB permet un alignement avec les objectifs stratégiques fixés dans le Décret Missions' (FWB, 2015, p. 10).
[56] Original quote: 'de former des êtres capables de penser par eux-mêmes et d'agir librement' (FWB, 2015, p. 5).
[57] Let us note that the French word *métacognition* does not appear at all in the documents. Therefore, all mentions refer to the word *métacognitive*.

	SOCLES DE COMPÉTENCES – LANGUES MODERNES				**COMPÉTENCES TERMINALES ET SAVOIRS REQUIS**							
	Old (1999) (7 pages)		*New (2017)* (90 pages)		*Old (1999/2000)*				*New (2017)*			
					HGT (9 pages)		HPT (4 pages)		HGT (148 pages)		HPT (118 pages)	
	N_{occ}	***%***	**N_{occ}**	***%***	**N_{occ}**	***%***	**N_{occ}**	***%***	**N_{occ}**	***%***	**N_{occ}**	***%***
stratégies	2	*28.6*	58	*64.4*	4	*44.4*	0	*0*	92	*62.2*	73	*61.9*
stratégie	0	*0*	8	*8.9*	0	*0*	0	*0*	14	*9.5*	11	*9.3*
stratégiques	0	*0*	45	*50.0*	2	*22.2*	0	*0*	69	*46.6*	53	*44.9*
méta-	0	*0*	10	*11.1*	0	*0*	0	*0*	16	*10.8*	12	*10.2*
TOTAL:	**2**	***28.6***	**121**	***134.4***	**6**	***66.7***	**0**	***0***	**191**	***129.1***	**149**	***126.3***
					6 / 9+4 **6/13** ***46.2***				**191+149 / 148+118** **340/266** ***127.8***			

N_{occ} = $N_{occurrences}$; % = *relative frequency* N_{occ}/N_{pages}; HGT = *Humanités générales et technologiques*; HPT = *Humanités professionnelles et techniques*

Table 6: Overall frequency of the terms related to strategies and metacognition in the WBF reference frameworks[58]

Looking at the *Socles de compétences*, it is possible to notice to what extent the new version (2017c) contains more occurrences of the terms related to *strategies* and *metacognition* than the previous document (1999b): while the old framework of reference (1999b) mentions the word *stratégies* twice in its seven pages[59] and does not refer to metacognition, the French terms *stratégies*, *stratégie*, *stratégiques*[60], as well as *métacognitive* occur respectively 58, 8, 45, and 10 times in the 90-page[59] new version (2017c). As regards to the *Compétences terminales et savoirs requis* (see *Table 6*), more references can also be noticed in the new versions, i.e 340 references in 266 pages (2017a, b), than in the old ones, i.e. six references in 13 pages (1999a, 2000). This is also expressed in the relative frequency, which is lower in the old reference frameworks (46.2% vs 127.8% in the new ones). In general, there is thus an increase in terms related to the strategic dimension of FL in the more recent frameworks. Furthermore, the old WBF frameworks are not very specific about strategies. Indeed, when precising what it consists in, the document entitled *Compétences minimales* (1999a) confines itself to strategies used

[58] This representation is inspired from Nathalie Moers's dissertation.
[59] This page number excludes front page and tables of contents, references, and appendices.
[60] Let us note the consideration of the words containing a typo (i.e. strategiques).

during Gauthier et al. (2013)'s preparation and interaction phases (see *2.1.3 Explicit teaching*), leaving aside the metacognitive part of RCS identified in this MA thesis (see *2.1.2 Reading comprehension strategies*, pp. 23-24). In comparison, the new frameworks (2017a, b) are more detailed: in addition to defining the strategic dimension of RC through the framing of the activity and the formulation of hypotheses, they also insist on the verification and revision of these hypotheses, thus echoing the metacognitive dimension of the task.

The WBF reference papers are organized into noteworthy *Unités d'Acquis d'Apprentissage* (UAA) tables centered on one communicative skill (speaking, listening, reading, or writing) at a given language level (from A1 to B2). Those illustrate a connection between linguistic, grammatical, phonological, and strategic resources. Therefore, in agreement with the CEFR, they consider strategies as tools that help in the realization of tasks that mobilize all kinds of resources themselves. Looking more closely at the UAA referring to RC in the new reference frameworks, one notices that the new *Compétences terminales* (2017a, b) uses the same descriptors as the new *Socles de compétences* (2017c) for beginner levels (A1–A2) and further specifies the different resources to be achieved by more accomplished B1 to B2 readers, including strategies. Then, similarities can be found between the strategies identified in this MA thesis and the strategies described for each CEFR level of RC proficiency. Indeed, many of the RCS listed in the operational definition of this dissertation (see *2.4 Towards an operational definition of reading comprehension strategies*) are represented either in the objectives to be achieved at the end of the first common degree of secondary education or in the aims to reach at the end of secondary education. This is the case for activation of prior knowledge, verification of hypotheses, repair of misinterpretations, or evaluation of understanding to modify one's representations, which are RCS that can be found both at lower (A1 and A2) and higher (B1 and B2) levels. In fact, there is not much difference between the strategies mentioned at the higher levels (B1 and B2) and those at the lower levels (A1 and A2). What changes is the absence of the strategy relying on word morphology or context to deduce the meaning of unknown expressions at A1 level. At the lower level, the importance to know how to frame the text thanks to the visual elements, which may or not be present, is also mentioned. On the other hand, it is specified for the other CEFR levels, that this framing can also be done thanks to a wider paratext such as the page layout and typographical conventions.

However, it can also be noted that some RCS are not listed in either reference framework. Indeed, in these reference frameworks, none of the CEFR levels explicitly require students to pay attention to the purpose of the reading task, to skim the text, to represent the information mentally or on paper, or to summarize the text. In addition, the more metacognitive

strategies included in the third category of the definition of this MA thesis, i.e. Evaluate and check strategies and efficiency afterwards (see *2.4 Towards an operational definition of reading comprehension strategies*), such as the sharing with classmates, the ability of the readers to call their comprehension into question and the evaluation of one's learning are not explicitly stated as strategies that students should be able to apply during RC either. This is understandable, given that, as stated in the operational definition of this dissertation, RCS are tools that enable students to achieve better results, which should not be considered an end in itself, they do not necessarily need to be cited as the learning to be mastered at certain levels of education, though they might be effective. In this sense, the authors of the reference frameworks state the following:

> Les UAA peuvent également faire appel à des démarches ou procédures générales qui, par leur réinvestissement répété dans des contextes variés, prennent un caractère transversal, soit intradisciplinaire (démarche expérimentale, démarche historienne, démarche géographique…) soit transdisciplinaire (techniques de communication écrite ou orale, utilisation d'outils informatiques…) : par convention, elles sont ici dénommées « **stratégies transversales** ». En les explicitant, on évite de les mobiliser comme si elles allaient de soi pour l'élève et ne nécessitaient pas des apprentissages spécifiques. (Communauté française de Belgique, 2017c, p. 2)

On account of that, those cross-functional strategies ought to be worked on because, first, they are not self-evident to the students, and second, they are efficient. Moreover, as the new reference frameworks are based on the CEFR, the reference frameworks only introduce the strategic dimension as it is found in this European reference. This implies, among other things, that the student should learn to use RCS 'to develop a logic of progressive and spiral acquisition of skills' (Communauté française de Belgique, 2017c, p. 1).[61] In other words and as already stated in this dissertation, students should learn to use strategies according to their learning needs.

In summary, it is possible to observe an increase in the absolute frequency of terms referring to strategies and metacognition in the new WBF reference frameworks. Nonetheless, this rise must be put into perspective due to the equally increasing length of the new frameworks. Then, although not all RCS identified in this MA thesis are cited in the WBF frameworks, this analysis suggests that many of those still are. Yet, when strategies are mentioned at the different levels, there is not much difference between the ones that have to be taught to the lower levels of FL and the ones that have to be taught to the higher ones. This would perhaps prove, as mentioned earlier, that the teacher needs to reactivate RCS a bit at all

[61] Original quote: 'Pour s'inscrire dans une logique d'acquisition progressive et spiralaire de compétences' (Communauté française de Belgique, 2017c, p. 1)

levels but that students will surely have more autonomy over these RCS in the higher levels of language proficiency. Lastly, the WBF reference frameworks do not allow to specify clear methods concerning the teaching of the strategic dimension of RC. They only advocate what students have to be taught. To find out more about the methods, i.e. whether RCS ought to be explicitly taught or not, the following section will investigate the curricula for modern languages and help in discovering the WBF's perspective on the issue.

3.3.2 Curricula specific to each network

The most recent curricula analyzed in this section are based on the 2017 reference frameworks examined in the previous part of this dissertation. Indeed, whereas frameworks specify what must be taught, curricula specify how the subject matter should be addressed. This implies that curricula may differ from one school network to the other while still maintaining a similar basis, i.e. the requirements from the most recent reference frameworks. This section will therefore look more specifically at explicit teaching as defined in the theoretical framework of this paper and how each network advocates it. To this end, it will analyze the 2020 curricula of the official organized network, i.e. Wallonie-Bruxelles Enseignement (WBE), and the 2018 curricula of the free subsidized network.

When looking for the terms that are relevant to this dissertation in the curricula of the official school network, the analyses reveal the data that can be found in *Table 7*. Indeed, it has already been observed that the strategic dimension is not unknown to the official documents. It should therefore be logical that it appears in the curricula as well. The following analyses not only attest to the presence of this strategic dimension, but also to the very similar or even identical number of occurrences from one curriculum to another.[62] Though the relative frequencies are different between the documents (because they are based on the number of pages, which is also different), the word *stratégies* is found 41 times in each curriculum (see *Table 7*). This similarity is explained by the little difference observed between the expectations of the different CEFR levels in the reference frameworks (see *3.3.1 Reference papers common to all networks of education*). Therefore, as the curricula are based on the frameworks, it is logical that no significant difference concerning how to teach at the different levels is found. The difference observed in the number of occurrences of the word *stratégiques* is, in fact, due to the different numbers of examples of learning situations given by the curricula. In addition, we can also observe the absence of the stem *méta-* from all the documents analyzed. It should be noted, however, that the phrase *démarche métacognitive* is still present in the glossary of the

[62] As strategies not only apply to RC, a choice had to be made and these data only refer to the occurrences attributed to the general meaning of the word or when it is directly link to RC.

documents as well as in the appendices when the reference frameworks UAA tables are included. *Table 7* also allows us to notice the absence of the mention of strategy in the singular, thus making the link with an idea found in the literature, i.e. strategies are often seen as a whole and not independent of each other (see 2.1.2 Reading comprehension strategies pp. 29-30).[63]

OFFICIAL SCHOOL NETWORK

	Programme d'études Langues Modernes – Enseignement secondaire ordinaire 1er degré commun (2020) *(123 pages)*[64]		*Programme d'études Langues Modernes – Enseignement secondaire ordinaire HGT 2e et 3e degrés (2020)* *(134 pages)*[64]		*Programme d'études Langues Modernes – Enseignement secondaire ordinaire HPT 2e et 3e degrés (2020)* *(137 pages)*[64]	
	N_{occ}	**%**	**N_{occ}**	**%**	**N_{occ}**	**%**
stratégies	41	*33.3*	41	*30.6*	41	*29.9*
stratégie	0	*0*	0	*0*	0	*0*
stratégiques	6	*4.9*	5	*3.7*	7	*5.1*
méta-	0	*0*	0	*0*	0	*0*
TOTAL:	**47**	***38.2***	**46**	***34.3***	**48**	***35.0***

N_{occ} = $N_{occurrences}$; % = *relative frequency* N_{occ}/N_{pages}; HGT = *Humanités générales et technologiques*; HPT = *Humanités professionnelles et techniques*

Table 7: Overall frequency of the terms related to strategies and metacognition in the Official school network curricula[65]

As the primary vocation of the curricula is to provide a methodology, it is relevant to look more deeply at what is said about RCS to see if these documents advocate for their explicit teaching. Indeed, unlike the CEFR or the reference frameworks, the curricula provide information on the teaching methods by giving indications to teachers on how to deal with RC and its strategies by offering examples of learning situations. The first observation when analyzing the different examples given by the curricula concerns the presentation of strategic resources for RC activities. Indeed, with the presentation in different points, i.e. *A. Framing, B. Formulating hypotheses, C. Verifying hypotheses,* and *D. Reviewing hypotheses*, the curricula echo the CEFR and its *planning*, *execution*, *evaluation*, and *repair* phases. Then, the examples of activities, and especially the examples of instructions to be given to students, echo the keywords *ahead*, *during*, and *afterwards* of the operational definition of this work (see 2.4

[63] Note that the word is used twice in the singular in each document but it refers to the word *technique* or *procedure*, and not to the concept as defined in this MA thesis.
[64] This page number excludes front page and tables of contents, references, and appendices.
[65] This representation is inspired from Nathalie Moers's dissertation.

Towards an operational definition of reading comprehension strategies). These keywords being themselves based on the theory of explicit teaching, they can then be put in parallel with the three main phases of Gauthier et al.'s PIC model (2013), based on *the preparation of learning*, *the interaction with students*, and *the strengthening of learning* (see *2.1.3 Explicit teaching*). Indeed, the curricula give examples of instructions for students before reading a document, during reading, and they also advise having students reread the text and review their responses after the task. Although one could argue that the strengthening phase is absent from these examples of activities as there are no instructions referring to future activities, the following note, present in all WBE curricula, confirms the contrary:

> L'enseignant veillera à outiller l'élève de savoirs (règles de grammaire, lexique…) et de savoir-faire (utilisation des savoirs et des stratégies de communication) porteurs de sens. Il va de soi que l'appropriation et/ou la réactivation des savoirs et savoir-faire se feront toujours dans le cadre d'une séquence d'apprentissage, l'objectif étant d'outiller l'élève en vue de la réalisation des tâches d'application et/ou de transfert. L'élève sera ensuite capable de mobiliser ces ressources indifféremment d'une situation donnée à l'autre. (Wallonie-Bruxelles Enseignement, 2020a, p. 13, 2020b, p. 12, 2020c, p. 12)

Hence, WBE curricula ensure that teachers should help students memorize what they have learned, including strategies, to transfer these learnings for later recall. In addition, the curricula refer to the notion of UAA and indicate:

> Dans le processus « connaitre », l'élève pourra à la fois citer et/ou expliciter ces ressources (SSFL, stratégies de communication…) et justifier les conditions dans lesquelles celles-ci peuvent être mobilisées (« je sais quand, pourquoi, comment utiliser tel savoir ou tel savoir-faire »). Cette démarche peut se faire de façon prospective ou rétrospective et ne fera l'objet que d'une évaluation formative. (Wallonie-Bruxelles Enseignement, 2020a, p. 13, 2020b, p. 12, 2020c, p. 12)

This statement evokes the six questions defined for explicit strategy instruction by Winograd and Hare (1988) (see *2.1.3 Explicit teaching* p. 34). It indeed refers to the declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge of strategies that students must be able to articulate. In addition, this quote insists on the futility of assessing strategies, thus emphasizing the idea that RCS are tools to help students according to their needs. However, teachers do not have any methodological indications referring to the three main steps of explicit teaching that could help them know how to actually teach strategies. Namely, there is no indication of modeling, guided practice, or self-directed practice, nor examples of instructions referring to these three steps. Despite appearances, the WBE documents remain vague (if not silent) concerning the methods that teachers can use in class.

Then, conducting the same analyses in the curriculum of the free school network results in the establishment of *Table 8*.[66] This time, the number of occurrences is not the same but, when put in perspective with the number of pages, the percentages that represent the relative frequencies are very close to each other. Indeed, the percentages related to the word *stratégies* all revolve around 40%. Yet this is not all. When comparing the total percentages, they too are similar; with 69.7% for the 1st degree curriculum (2020a), 60.5% for the 2nd and 3rd degree of general and technological education (HGT) curriculum, and 64.3% for the 2nd and 3rd degree of technical and vocational (HPT) education curriculum. One also notices the absence of the stem *méta-* from all the documents and the prevalence of the word *stratégies* in the plural over the word in the singular (see *Table 8*). Still, although the word metacognition is absent from the curricula, there are several mentions of 'pair work' in the examples of learning situations in the free school network. These then promote cognitive conflicts between students, i.e. the positive confrontation of points of view on learning and are, therefore, linked to metacognition.

FREE SCHOOL NETWORK

	Programme Langues Modernes – 1er degré Commun (2018) (66 pages)[67]		*Programme Langues Modernes I, II, III – 2e et 3e degrés HGT (2018) (91 pages)*[68]		*Programme Langues Modernes – Formation Générale Commune 2e et 3e degrés HPT (2017) (84 pages)*[68]	
	N_{occ}	***%***	**N_{occ}**	***%***	**N_{occ}**	***%***
stratégies	27	*40.9*	37	*40.7*	34	*40.5*
stratégie	5	*7.6*	2	*2.2*	3	*3.6*
stratégiques	14	*21.2*	16	*17.6*	17	*20.2*
metacognitive	0	*0*	0	*0*	0	*0*
TOTAL:	**46**	***69.7***	**55**	***60.5***	**54**	***64.3***

N_{occ} = $N_{occurrences}$; % = *relative frequency* N_{occ}/N_{pages}; HGT = *Humanités générales et technologiques*; HPT = *Humanités professionnelles et techniques*

Table 8: Overall frequency of the terms related to strategies and metacognition in the Free school network curricula

As with the official school network documents, the purpose of this analysis is to determine whether explicit strategy instruction is advocated within the free school network. My observations are as follows: First of all, the four points are already present in the official

[66] These data also refer only to the words when used in its general sense or in relation to RC.
[67] This page number excludes front page and tables of contents, references, and appendices.

teaching curricula, which makes a link with the operational definition of this dissertation are found, i.e. *A. Framing*, *B. Formulating hypotheses*, *C. Verifying hypotheses*, and *D. Reviewing hypotheses*. Secondly, the way in which the examples of activities are presented also echoes the key words *ahead*, *during*, and *afterwards* and thus the different phases of explicit teaching. Indeed, a particular order of activities is suggested for each for each RC example. However, the free curricula do not mention the three steps of explicit teaching and do not give much methodological indication to the teachers either. There is a semblance of a methodological indication in a RC activity proposed in the HGT curriculum, which goes as follows:

> N.B. si les élèves n'ont pas d'idées à suggérer, le professeur pourra leur proposer une liste d'items (dont certains sont incorrects) dans lesquels ils feront alors des choix (qui pourront être objets de discussion dans la classe) – voir exemple ci-dessous. (Fédération de l'Enseignement Secondaire Catholique, 2018b, p. 94)

However, this indication is in fact only a proposal for an additional activity to work on the strategy 'exploiting linguistic clues'.

In some ways, these activities seem to make the teaching of RCS explicit. However, in order for their teaching to be described as such, students must be aware of what they learn in order to reuse the learnings independently in other activities (Kong, 2019). To do this, the theory of this dissertation has established that it is necessary to go through Gauthier et al.'s (2013) three steps of explicit instruction (see *2.1.3 Explicit teaching*). From the analyses above, however, these notions, or even other methodological indications for teachers, seem to be absent from the official documents. Moreover, during the interview (see *Appendix F*), we were able to notice that to make students more aware of the strategies they employ, the strategic dimension sometimes had to be triggered. One of our interviewees indeed said:

> Je pense qu'il faut faire le lien explicitement avec les élèves. Ça, c'est issu de mon expérience où je me suis retrouvée avec des rhétos à dire : « Allez les gars, comment on rédige un texte, qu'est-ce qu'un paragraphe ?, Et puis : « Qu'est-ce que c'est que les mots-lien ? On parle de ça depuis le début de l'année » Et puis il y a un élève qui m'a dit : « C'est comme en français en fait ? C'est comme une dissertation ? », « Oui, c'est ça ». Et donc, peut-être que je n'avais jamais dit explicitement : « C'est une langue et donc ce que vous faites dans votre langue maternelle, toutes les méthodes que vous apprenez, on les applique ici. On ne peut pas apprendre deux choses différentes, ça se rejoint. » (*Appendix F*)

This triggering thus has to be made as explicit as possible. Sometimes, a sentence is enough to show the students how to use the strategy, then supervising them during individual work is required so that they can reuse what they have learned on their own later on.

When the two school networks are compared, the curricula of the free one seem to place more emphasis on the planning part of a reading task than on the reflection after the task. Indeed, for the examples of learning activities suggested, there are often more activities that take place before the reading than activities that would allow students to reflect on their actions. Another difference lies in the layout of the curricula of the free school network. Indeed, the strategies that the exercises necessitate are noted down in the latter whereas, in the curricula of the official school network, they are only alluded to in the form of questions teacher could ask the students, who will then have to use RCS. This could create a difference between users of the different curricula. While free school network teachers might be able to transfer the questions more easily when they want to work on a particular strategy in a new exercise because they know exactly what strategy it refers to, official school network teachers might be less able to do so because the strategies that the suggested exercises tackle are not explicitly mentioned.

Following the analysis of the reference materials and curricula for modern languages, it is now possible to answer question **3a** (*Is the notion of comprehension strategies included in the reference papers and curricula of the WBF?)*; yes, even though all the RCS mentioned in this dissertation are not present, the WBF frameworks of reference and curricula mention the strategic dimension. Still, this section of my MA thesis highlights that the relative frequency of the terms *stratégies*, *stratégie*, *stratégiques*, and *métacognitive* is higher in the WBF reference papers than in the different curricula. This confirms hypothesis $\boldsymbol{H_{3a.1}}$ mentioned earlier in this work. Concerning question **3b** (*If so, is an explicit teaching recommended?)*, the answer must be qualified. In a way, the strategies are made very explicit because exercises that work on them are presented. However, both school networks leave their teachers confused as to the autonomous reuse from the students to which the explicit teaching is supposed to lead. Indeed, the examples given in the curricula do not provide insight into how teachers will/should actually work in the classroom and the results that these methods may have on students. Moreover, the lack of methodological guidance makes it unclear how teachers are supposed to teach the strategies. This analysis thus confirms the $\boldsymbol{H_{3b.1}}$ hypothesis. Lastly, question **4** (*Are there any differences between the two school networks in their approach to the explicit teaching of comprehension strategies?*) has been positively answered thanks to these analyses. On the one hand, the free school network seems to emphasize the preparation phase of learning, whereas the official network proposes more activities for the other phases of explicit teaching. On the other hand, the official network is not explicit enough in its presentation of the strategies associated with the different exercises it offers. However, both networks still have something in common: they both appear to provide little methodological guidance on the teaching of RCS. Consequently, this lack of methodology in the programs leads me to analyze the methods

proposed in the training courses offered to teachers in the WBF. This is particularly what the following section of this MA thesis is dedicated to. Hopefully, as the didactic advantages of explicit strategy teaching have been proven by the scientific literature, indications on how to implement it in the classrooms of the French-speaking part of Belgium should be included in the training given to its teachers.

3.4 Comprehension strategies in the legal requirements of the Wallonia Brussel Federation

In the French-speaking part of Belgium, ongoing training has been mandatory for teachers since 2003. They must follow six half-days of training per year. They can also follow courses on a voluntary basis. On-the-job training is organized by the *Institut de la formation en cours de carrière* (IFC), by the school networks, as well as by the organizing authorities of each school. Given that little methodological information on explicit teaching of RCS is given in the WBF's reference materials and programs, and in view of the advantages of such teaching as proven in the scientific literature, teachers should be trained in it. This section of my dissertation then analyzes the ongoing training provided to Belgian French-speaking teachers and makes the following hypotheses:

$H_{5.0}$ ***The teaching of comprehension strategies is included in secondary-school FL teachers of the WBF's ongoing training.***

$H_{5.1}$ ***The teaching of comprehension strategies is not included in secondary-school FL teachers of the WBF's ongoing training.***

The IFC is the WBF reference for the organization and implementation of on-the-job training in inter-networks. It trains all members of the teaching staff, regardless of the organizing authority for which they work. It is therefore an organization at the service of the global WBF educational institution. As such, the training program with the titles of the courses and some additional information on each of them can be found on their website. This website allows anyone to search for training by keyword. In the context of this research, I searched for the French keywords *langues*, *stratégies*, *lecture*, and *métacognition*. The following table summarizes the number of training courses found for each keyword:

KEYWORD:	***langues***	***stratégies***	***lecture***	***métacognition***
TOTAL OF TRAINING COURSES:	21	23	20	8

Table 9: Number of training courses per keywords found on the website of IFC

I then had to read more in depth the descriptions of the different training courses that the browser suggested to see if they were relevant to the topic of this MA thesis.

First, the search based on the keyword *langues* makes it possible to realize that no training on reading strategies, or on the strategic dimension in general, seems to be related to the FL course. The training programs that the browser proposes then concern the CEFR, the new frameworks of reference, or more specific topics such as cultural references. However, given the results of the search based on the word *stratégies,* RCS are not unknown to the IFC. Indeed, this research results in 23 courses. However, one of the UCL Ph.D. students interviewed in the context of this dissertation notes that enrollment in these strategy training is low (see *Appendix F*). This would indicate a lack of willingness to learn about these pedagogical innovations, which is probably linked to a general advertising or promoting problem regarding these subjects. Additionally, while some of these 23 training courses are not relevant to the topic of this dissertation, seven of them relate to RCS. Note that, as previously mentioned, the strategies present in these courses are not directly related to the FL course and concern other disciplines, such as L1 French. Still, as highlighted during the interview (*Appendix F*) and in the scientific literature (Alderson, 2005; Anderson, 1999), L1 strategies may be transferred to FL making the corresponding training courses still relevant to this MA thesis. Further on, when looking for the keyword *lecture*, in addition to noticing that many of the courses offered by the search engine are common to the ones suggested when searching for the word *stratégies*, there are also several trainings on 'learning to learn'[68]. These trainings are oriented towards the assistance that a teacher can give to students to help them recognize their type of learning and the strategies they use to learn better. Without a doubt, this echoes the metacognitive side of strategies and the benefits of metacognition as defined in this MA thesis. On the other hand, when one researches training courses based on the word *métacognition*, the system points to training for learning disabilities. This may in fact be related to the point already made in this dissertation, i.e., metacognition is a learning enhancement that is of great benefit to students with learning disabilities (see *2.1.3 Explicit teaching* p. 30). Let us not forget, however, that it has been shown that strategies, metacognition, and explicit teaching of those can also serve students without particular difficulties.

In general, although teachers seem to be pushed to use the strategies that are made explicit in some courses, this is not unique to language teachers. The titles of the trainings allow us to answer question **5** (*Is the teaching of comprehension strategies included in secondary-school foreign language teachers of the WBF's ongoing training?*) in a limited way. Language

[68] Original course name: *Apprendre à apprendre- Pistes de travail pour l'enseignant*

teachers have access to these trainings on the IFC website, but they are not specifically aimed at them. This does not confirm any of the hypotheses put forward at the beginning of this section.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter attempts to answer different questions. First, it answers question **2a** (*Is the notion of comprehension strategies included in the CEFR?*) saying that the strategic dimension is present in the CEFR as many occurrences of the terms can be found in the book. Moreover, it gives an answer to **2b** (*If so, is an explicit teaching recommended?*), highlighting that the CEFR promotes, even if on few occasions, the explicit teaching of this dimension to 'strengthen independence of thought, judgement and action, combined with social skills and responsibility' (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 4). Inevitably, the answer to question **3a** (*Is the notion of comprehension strategies included in the reference papers and curricula of the WBF?*) is positive; strategies are found in the curricula and frameworks (in greater quantity in the latter). However, it is not possible to draw any clear conclusions concerning question **3b** (*If so, is an explicit teaching recommended?*). Indeed, there are few methodological indications in these documents that allude to an explicit teaching of strategies. Therefore, this does not allow one to say what type of teaching is recommended in the WBF for the two education networks. Furthermore, concerning question **4** (*Are there any differences between the two school networks in their approach to the explicit teaching of comprehension strategies?*), this dissertation states that though the two school networks are not identical in their approach to strategies, they both lack clear methodological indications, preventing one from specifically knowing how FL teachers are advised to teach. Finally, when I analyzed the place of explicit RCS teaching in the IFC training in order to answer question **5** (*Is the teaching of comprehension strategies included in secondary-school foreign language teachers of the WBF's ongoing training?*), I discovered that the ongoing training does not promote RCS in FL in significant quantities either. The strategies are nevertheless not unknown to the system as they are found in more general training or in training for teachers of other disciplines. To go further in the research on the subject, a questionnaire on the use of strategies in WBF classrooms was created. It is especially the construction, administration, and results analyses of this questionnaire that will be developed in the following chapter.

4 QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE USE OF COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES IN WALLONIA-BRUSSEL FEDERATION'S CLASSROOMS

As briefly explained in the introduction, a questionnaire on the teaching of RCS was carried out via an internet link and addressed to modern FL teachers of the WBF.[69] A copy of this questionnaire is presented in *Appendix E*. The main objective of this survey is to learn more about the use of RCS by experienced teachers in their respective classes but also their knowledge and opinions about it. In fact, the aim is to know if WBF teachers know what RCS are, if they use them in their FL classes, and if so, how they use them. This survey also gives me the opportunity to evaluate whether those teachers think the learning or teaching of RCS is a good thing or not. Eventually, it will also give me some insight into their teaching methods and whether they are close to explicit teaching or not. The aim of the present chapter is to present this survey, the method employed, its results and the conclusions that these results allow me to draw.

4.1 Questionnaire design and method

4.1.1 Construction

The construction of this questionnaire was based on Zoltán Dörnyei and Tatsuya Taguchi's work *Questionnaires in Second Language Research. Construction, Administration, and Processing* (2010). As advised by Professor Germain Simons and Ph.D. student Audrey Renson, it was assembled with questionnaires from five other students also writing their MA thesis on various subjects in the field of didactics. This made it possible to collect a maximum of answers by soliciting the WBF FL teachers only once. Furthermore, doing it this way allowed us to get past the concern that if we made six different questionnaires, teachers would only respond to one or two questionnaires, but not to the other four. Especially since they were already solicited by another questionnaire concerning another research at the time of publication, this was the optimal solution. Carrying out our survey in this manner allowed us to get answers from people who were probably not interested in all the different topics from the outset. Indeed, a questionnaire always addresses people with a minimum of interest in its topic; if I was to have published the survey on RCS on its own, people who were not interested in the topic would simply not have clicked on the link of the questionnaire and left the web page. However, grouping this topic with those of the other MA theses may have countered this tendency, i.e. some of the respondents took the trouble to answer my survey because they were

[69] Modern FL of the WBF concern English, Dutch, German, Spanish, and Italian.

interested in the topic of another thesis. There were parts of the questionnaire that addressed these particular people and said that even if they were not interested, their answers were of interest for the survey. In the end, then, this grouping helped reach a larger sample than if it had been presented alone. However, this inevitably lengthened the time of completion of our survey and put us at risk of making our investigation 'counterproductive' (see *4.4 Limitations of the survey*) (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p. 12). To partially counteract this issue, the questionnaire was thus designed in such a way that some of the answers to the questions allowed respondents to cut short and access only certain parts of it.

The first part of the questionnaire, which contains general instructions as well as questions to establish the respondent's profile,[70] was created in collaboration with the other students in didactics. Each of the students then attached their own questionnaire. The questions related to this research on RCS are only intended for WBF secondary-school teachers.[71] Yet, it also seems appropriate to consider the responses of FL teachers at the elementary level of education, as these form the prelude to secondary education. Therefore, the first question of the survey asks whether the participant teaches at those levels. If the answer is yes, the questionnaire directs the respondent to the following questions. If the answer is negative, the respondent is not prompted and proceeds directly to the next research's questionnaire.

First of all, the questionnaire introduces the RCS' operational definition found in *Appendix C*.[72] It also specifies that it is on this definition that the research is based. Giving a definition at the outset aimed at avoiding people answering the questionnaire with different RCS conceptions, which would have biased the results. Still, in the form of an open-ended question, the survey gives the opportunity to the respondent to add a nuance or a remark and so, avoids frustrating them by forcing them to comply with the definition given (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). The decision was made not to ask the respondent to give their own definition because, first, this task would probably have been difficult for some participants and, second, because Dörnyei & Taguchi (2010) argue that open-ended questions work particularly well if they are not completely open and respondents are slightly guided. Indeed, giving the respondents a definition at the beginning of the questionnaire with which they could agree or disagree serves this purpose. Considering this, comments and justifications sections were

[70] By 'respondent's profile' this MA thesis refers to the personal characteristics of each participant, such as the number of years of teaching, the school network, type and level of teaching, as well as the different languages taught and to which classes.

[71] Those do not include answers from teachers working in adult tertiary education as I want to focus exclusively on teachers' practices regarding RCS in secondary education.

[72] Note that this operational definition has been revised on the basis of the theoretical overview of this paper and a new operational definition is presented under *2.4 Towards an operational definition of reading comprehension strategies*.

sometimes added to the questionnaire to allow it to appear semi-open and avoid leaving respondents with the impression that they had to adapt their opinion or experience to my own. The following four questions were used to have a general idea of the teachers' relation to the topic of RC. The respondent is asked for information on the frequency of teaching and exercises in RC as well as their general opinion on the place of RCS at the different levels of education. The next question (question 37), which asks whether or not the participant works on RCS with their students, is crucial for the questionnaire because it leads the respondent to the section that is meant for them. Indeed, if the answer is yes, it points the respondent to the section entitled *Je travaille certaines des stratégies de compréhension à la lecture en classe*. If the answer is negative, the respondent is then led to the section entitled *Je ne travaille pas les stratégies de comprehension à la lecture en classe*.

The section *Je travaille certaines des stratégies de compréhension à la lecture en classe* covers questions 38 to 71. First of all, the participant is asked to only keep one class in mind and write it down, to facilitate the interpretation of the results. It can then be considered that this section of the questionnaire consists of five headings, which themselves sometimes have different sub-questions. These headings and the number of questions they contain are summarized in *Table 10* below. The third column of this table also specifies the type of questionnaire scale used for each heading. The titles given to the headings in the table do not appear in the online questionnaire given to teachers. However, they correspond to what this research inferred from the data collected via the various sub-questions.

I work on some RCS in my classroom

Heading	*Number of sub-questions*	*Questionnaire scale type*
Frequency of exercises involving RCS	1	Rating scale of frequency
Opinion on the teaching of RCS	14	Lickert scale
Ways of teaching RCS	1	Mixing scale type
Frequency of explicit teaching of RCS	6	Rating scale of frequency
Opinion on students' difficulties in relation to RCS	10	Lickert scale

Table 10: Organization within the section of the questionnaire "Je travaille certaines des stratégies de compréhension à la lecture en classe"

Table 10 also highlights the use of three different questionnaire scale types; a rating scale of frequency, a Lickert scale, and a mixing scale type. The first one faces the participants with

four frequency adverbs - *Never*, *Sometimes*, *Often*, and *Always*[73] - among which they must choose to make a judgment on the question. Those were used, for instance, with the following questions:[74]

> 39. À quelle fréquence proposez-vous les exercices suivants à vos élèves lors d'une compréhension à la lecture formative ?
>
> a. J'invite les élèves à exploiter leurs connaissances sur le sujet abordé dans le document écrit qu'ils vont lire.
> b. J'invite les élèves à formuler des hypothèses sur le contenu du document (à partir du titre, de photos, de dessins).
>
> 55. Lors d'une compréhension à la lecture formative, j'invite les élèves à identifier la fonction de communication principale du document (descriptif, narratif, incitatif, injonctif, argumentatif) en…
>
> a. exécutant la tâche devant eux et décrivant ce que je fais pendant que je le fais.
> b. les guidant dans la réalisation de la tâche par le biais d'exercices ciblés.
> c. les laissant réaliser spontanément la tâche mobilisant la stratégie.

This type of judgment scale nevertheless presents a potential risk of biased responses because the judgment values attributed to each adverb are specific to each respondent who may not consider the same subjective value as that attributed by this research.[75] Audrey Renson had, indeed, expressed this negative point about this type of scale in a videoconference interview. Then, the second type of item is the Lickert scale, which asks the respondent to express their degree of agreement with a statement. Those were used when the questions probed the respondent's opinion as in, for example, the following questions:[74]

> 40. L'enseignement des stratégies de compréhension prend trop de temps.
> 53. Les élèves apprennent les stratégies de compréhension de manière spontanée en faisant énormément de compréhension à la lecture.
> 61. Exploiter les connaissances préalables des élèves sur un sujet dans le but de les aider à réaliser une tâche de lecture est problématique.
> 69. Vérifier des hypothèses sur le contenu du document de la tâche de lecture est problématique pour les élèves.

Dörnyei & Taguchi (2010) argue that this scale is often composed of five categories ranging from *Strongly disagree* to *Strongly agree*. In the case of this questionnaire, and as advised by Audrey Renson, the choice was made to omit the middle category to avoid neutral responses that would have been chosen by respondents who could/would not make a choice (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). Indeed, when completing the questionnaire, the participant is asked to move a

[73] These frequency adverbs appear under the words *Jamais*, *Parfois*, *Souvent*, and *Toujours* in the questionnaire because it was attributed to WBF teachers who were probably predominantly French-speaking people.
[74] Other examples of questions using the same scale can be found in ***Appendix E***.
[75] For the sake of respecting the instructions of this dissertation which cannot exceed 100 pages, the results of these questions will not be presented in this report but will be used as a new point presented during the oral presentation of this work.

cursor between *Pas du tout d'accord*, corresponding to number 1 on the scale, and *Tout à fait d'accord*, corresponding to number 4 on the same scale. This does not allow them to choose a median position of 2.5 for example. Finally, the last scale type corresponds to a combination of what Dörnyei & Taguchi (2010) have described as 'rank order items' and 'checklists'. Strictly speaking, with a rank order item questionnaire, 'respondents are asked to order the items [of a list] by assigning a number to them according to their preferences' and, with a checklist type of questionnaire, 'respondents are instructed to mark the items on the list that apply to the particular question' (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, pp. 34, 36). This scale type was used with the following question:

> 54. Lorsque je travaille sur les ressources stratégiques dans le cadre de la compréhension à la lecture …
>
> a. J'exécute la tâche devant les élèves et décris ce que je fais pendant que je le fais.
> b. Je guide les élèves dans la réalisation de la tâche par le biais d'exercices ciblés.
> c. Les élèves réalisent spontanément la tâche dans une nouvelle tâche de lecture.
> d. Autre : …….

As part of the section focusing on the way of teaching RCS, the aim of this question was to find out how FL teachers explain these strategies to their students and whether they do so explicitly by following the three main steps of explicit teaching in the right order. Keeping in mind that some teachers might explain a RCS to their students with only one of the main steps, they are allowed to check only one statement in the present section. If more than one statement applies to them, they then must check the answer *Other*[76] and indicate the order in which they carry out the different steps. Ultimately, at the end of this section the participant is asked to specify the other classes (different from the one used as a reference for answering the questionnaire) in which they also work on RCS.

Had the participant responded earlier that they do not work on RCS with their students, they were then directed to the section entitled *Je ne travaille pas les stratégies de comprehension à la lecture en classe*, which covers questions 72 to 83. This section only contains suggestions as to possible reasons why the participant does not work on RCS in class. Using a Lickert scale similar to the one described above, the participant is asked to indicate their level of agreement with different statements. For the same reasons as expressed above, i.e. to avoid respondents' frustration (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010), a comments and justification box, in which the participant can write another possible reason why they do not work on RCS in class, was also added at the end of this section.

[76] This answer is given by the word *Autre* in French in the questionnaire.

After answering the questions in their respective sections, all participants are redirected to the final page of the questionnaire. According to Dörnyei & Taguchi (2010), this 'Final "Thank you"' has to be considered as basic courtesy. This page, indeed, thanks the respondent for their participation and also provides them with an email address that they can contact if they are interested in the research topic.[77] This page also provides a final opportunity for the respondent to express their views on the topic in a general way.

4.1.2 Trial run and administration

It was decided, in agreement with the other students writing their MA thesis in didactics, as well as with our supervisor Professor Simons, that this survey would be administered online via a link created by the *Google Forms* platform, making it a 'Web-Based Survey' (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). Indeed, this platform seemed convenient because it allows to generate Excel graphs directly from the answers collected by the questionnaire. On the other hand, this platform is sometimes limited in terms of layout and is sometimes very slow. Moreover, it does not allow respondents to save their responses for later and therefore does not address the length issue mentioned earlier. We indeed thought that if respondents could complete the questionnaire in more than one session, it would seem less time-consuming. Anyhow, this platform was chosen mainly because, first, it allowed us to create our questionnaires for free and, secondly, that it offers the possibility to work on it at the same time and with several people under a shared document.

Before finalizing the questionnaire and sending it to our respondents, several intermediate versions were produced and proofread by Professor Simons. One of them was even reread by Audrey Renson. Following the preliminary adjustments, a trial run was made to find possible mistakes, technical problems or to make suggestions. In practical terms, three teachers working with the didactics department at the Université de Liège (Alain Segatto, Florence Van Hoof and Julie Vanhoof) and six teachers from different backgrounds carried out the questionnaire and gave feedback to improve it if necessary. These nine people were a representative sample of the people targeted by the questionnaire in that they came from different school networks and their career seniority was varied. Their opinion could therefore still vary from that of researchers like Professor Simons and Ph.D. student Renson. The major changes between the different versions are shown in *Table 11*. [78]

[77] This approach supports compliance initiatives like GDPR, a regulation of the European Parliament and the Council of 2016, which does not allow for the request of personal data.
[78] These changes are by no means sorted out by order of importance but by order of appearance in the questionnaire.

	Before preliminary adjustments and trial run	*After preliminary adjustments and trial run*
1	Questions 33 and 34: Difficulty for the respondent to relate to RC frequency statements (formative and/or certifying).	Addition of the item 'other'.
2	Question 54: Poorly worded and too vague items - b. je guide les élèves dans la réalisation de la tâche par le biais d'exercices fermés - c. je guide les élèves en les invitant à réaliser la tâche de manière autonome	Items restated in: - b. je guide les élèves dans la réalisation de la tâche par le biais d'exercices ciblés - c. les élèves réalisent spontanément la tâche dans une nouvelle tâche de lecture
3	Questions 55 to 60: Difficulty of distinction between questions concerning formative RC and certifying RC.	Questions concerning certifying RC are dropped.
4	Questions 61 to 69: Grouping of statements concerning different information under a single question and difficulty for respondents to sort them using a numerical rating scale.	Statements are separated into different questions and respondents are asked to give their opinion using a Lickert scale.
5	Questions 68 and 69: Excess of unclear items seeking different information: - réviser et vérifier des hypothèses sur le contenu du document de la tâche de lecture est problématique pour les élèves	Change in two different items and rephrasing: - corriger des hypothèses sur le contenu du document de la tâche de lecture est problématique pour les élèves - vérifier des hypothèses sur le contenu du document de la tâche de lecture est problématique pour les élèves

Table 11: Major changes before finalizing the questionnaire

The first change gives the opportunity to respondents to add or formulate their answer in a way they might find more appropriate. Then, change number 2 alters the term *closed exercises* to *targeted exercises* because it is more precise. This change also concerned the notion of autonomy initially present in the statement, which would refer to an implicit teaching. Changing it to the notion of spontaneity refers more directly to the self-directed practice of explicit teaching. Subsequently, change number 3 was made because the probability that teachers train the RCS in certifying exercises is low. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, RCS strategies should only be a helping tool for students, and teachers should keep in mind that the primary purpose of the lesson is to read and understand the text. The problem that change number 4 addresses was that if some statements did not apply at all, respondents would not have been able to rank them all using a numerical rating scale. Therefore, each item was separated into statements with which respondents indicated their level of agreement on a Lickert scale. The last modification concerned the terms *review and verify* that became *correct* and, in another question, *verify*. The first one makes more sense for a teacher and means realizing that it is wrong and rephrasing it,

whereas the latter means to know if it is true or false. The changes above are the most important ones, but the trial run also allowed for changes in spelling and resolutions of technical problems.

Two other important changes were made and are not shown in *Table 11*. The first concerns the introduction to the questionnaire, which was described as too long and making the questionnaire too long as well. As briefly mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the conditions for the construction of this questionnaire made us concerned about its length and the *Google forms* platform did not provide us with a solution. To partially overcome this problem, the introduction was reworded to be clearer and more concise and to only focus on what is important. However, we made the decision to leave each student's personal message and did not completely solve the problem of length. Next, the operational definition of RCS was also considered too long and too academic by the pre-testers. I then removed a quote from the CEFR and a general explanation at the beginning of it to present only my personal definition as it is presented in *Appendix C*.

In the end, this questionnaire was sent to teachers who are part of the database of internship tutors working with the University of Liège. I also solicited language teachers I knew personally and the link to this survey was posted on social networks, such as Facebook, to try to reach as large a sample of teachers as possible.

4.1.3 Processing questionnaire data

To analyze the results, various data were obtained and collected in an Excel worksheet. First, I wanted to know the general opinion of teachers about the explicit teaching of RCS in relation to the level (LM1, LM2, LM3, immersion) and grade (5th elementary, 6th elementary, 1st secondary, 2nd secondary…) of their students. Thus, I proceeded with an analysis with cross-tabulation. This allowed me to discover if teachers think strategic teaching is more or less important at certain levels and for certain classes.

Additionally, as I not only wanted to see if teachers say they teach strategies in their classes, but also how they say they teach them and if those methods correspond to explicit teaching, I ran an analysis to determine the ways of teaching RCS with the declarative data of teachers who teach RCS in their classes. Following these analyses, with the declarative data of teachers who do not teach RCS, I examined the reasons for such a choice. Since I had also included some open-ended questions in my questionnaire to allow respondents to justify some of their answers, I had to go through all the answers to these questions and code them to obtain quantitative data that could be represented in a graph.

Ultimately, I wanted to explore the relationship that could possibly exist between the declarative data collected with this questionnaire and the data found in official documents and legal requirements. Therefore, I examined the results those analysis gave me and established relationships with the conclusions I was able to draw from the previous chapter (see *3. Comprehension strategies in official documents and legal requirements of the Wallonia-Brussels federation*). These analyses helped me to see to what extent FL teachers of the WBF are familiar with the explicit teaching of RCS and aimed at getting the results of the following research questions:

(6a)	Are teachers of the WBF familiar with the notion of comprehension strategies?
(6b)	If so, do they explicitly teach those when practicing reading comprehension in their classroom?

4.1.4 Hypotheses

On the basis of the several conclusions drawn from the previous chapter of this dissertation, several hypotheses can be put forward for the two research questions relevant to this questionnaire:

$H_{6.1}$ ***As RCS are a recurring theme in the official documents of the WBF and in the literature, all WBF teachers are familiar with the notion and explicitly teach RCS in their classrooms.***

This reflection is based on the positive prevalence of strategic teaching on students' results and especially on their motivation highlighted by the scientific literature (see *2.3 The explicit teaching of comprehension strategies: Pros and cons*). It also takes into account that strategies help in becoming autonomous in a FL, which is mostly advised by the official documents (see *3. Comprehension strategies in official documents and legal requirements of the Wallonia-Brussels federation*). Indeed, one of our interviewees highlights that FL teachers might feel more inclined to use the strategies because they are present in the official documents (see *Appendix F*). Therefore, it states that teachers in the WBF will be keen to explicitly teach the strategic dimension.

On the other hand, several factors identified in the preceding chapter of this MA thesis may lead WBF teachers to avoid the explicit teaching of RCS even though they are familiar with the theoretical notion. Indeed, as several studies have shown, too much instructional time ends up being spent on RCS rather than on reading the text itself, which can lead to a sense of ineffectiveness among teachers (see *2.3 The explicit teaching of comprehension strategies:*

Pros and cons). The fact that teachers may then think the explicit teaching of RCS is unproductive, allows me to make the following assumption:

$H_{6.2}$ ***WBF teachers think the explicit teaching of RCS to students takes too much time.***

Secondly, the lack of methodological indications in the official documents and legal requirements (see *3. Comprehension strategies in official documents and legal requirements of the Wallonia-Brussels federation*) leads us to hypothesize that many teachers of the WBF, who probably know what RCS are, may feel lost in regard to their teaching in the classroom:

$H_{6.3}$ ***WBF teachers claim they lack methodological indications about the explicit teaching of RCS.***

Then, as the clarification and application of strategies is often carried out in L1 and not in FL, some FL teachers may not take it into account in their courses. Though this hypothesis goes against what seems to be prescribed in the CEFR, which appears to consider the strategic dimension as an important tool to accomplish tasks at any language level, it emerged from the interview of the two Ph.D. students. Indeed, during their research, our interviewees were confronted with remarks concerning the slightly simplistic side related to the explanation of strategies (see *Appendix F*). Moreover, one can assume that teachers would want to focus on maximum use of the FL in the classroom. Consequently, the explicit teaching of RCS would be restricted to the lower levels of language where L1 would continue to have an appropriate role to play.

$H_{6.4}$ ***As RCS explicit teaching is mostly carried out in L1, it might appear to be rather simplistic at first glance and strategies would only be explicitly taught by WBF teachers at the elementary levels of language learning.***

Ultimately, since it has been analyzed that the strategic dimension is more largely present in the more recent documents (see *3. Comprehension strategies in official documents and legal requirements of the Wallonia-Brussels federation*), it could also be hypothesized that there would be a difference between the most recently trained teachers and the teachers initially trained with the old documents:

$H_{6.5}$ ***The most recently trained WBF teachers might explicitly teach RCS to a larger extent than the teachers initially trained with the old documents.***

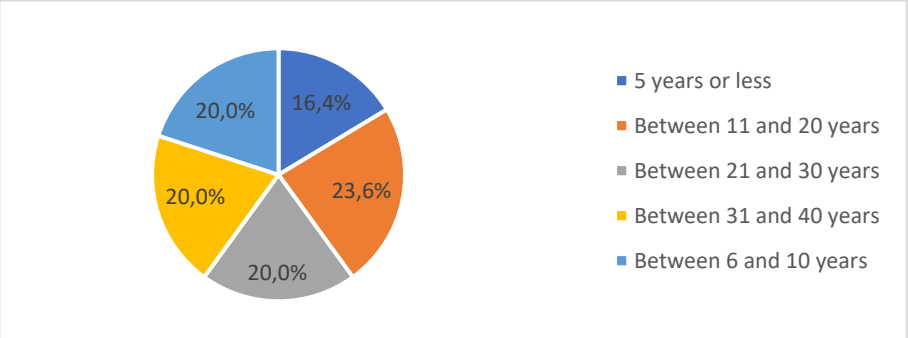
Indeed, during teacher training, courses on programs and reference materials are given. However, it would seem that these documents have more impact when used on the job. As a result, there would be a difference between teachers who are just starting out in the profession

and who use the new standards to develop their courses, and more experienced teachers, whose courses are based on older standards. The analyses in *4.3 Results and discussion* will tend to confirm or disprove these hypotheses.

4.2 Questionnaire respondent profile

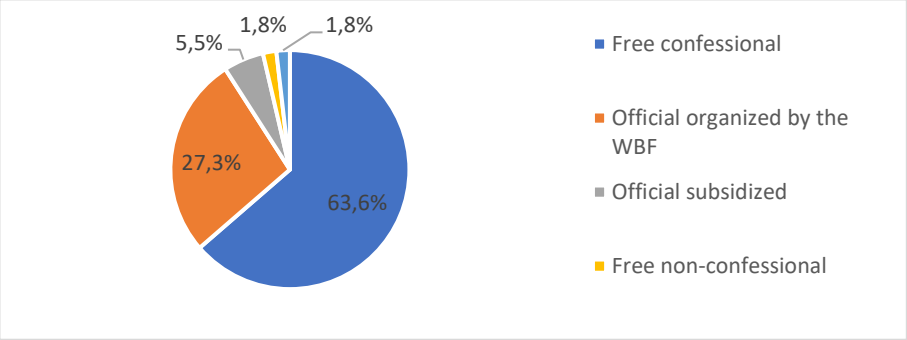
As already mentioned in the section concerning the construction of this questionnaire, the survey on RCS was intended for current FL teachers of the WBF in both elementary and secondary education. Because the online survey actually regroups six questionnaires, the sample turned out to be broader and any FL teacher of the WBF could answer the questionnaire. After eliminating answers that were irrelevant, 55 participants were retained for the common questionnaire. Indeed, some participants had opened the survey but not answered any of the questions; one person had filled in each answer box with a series of incomprehensible letters, and another respondent was not a current teacher of the WBF. The figures presented in this section concern the respondent's profile of the entire group, i.e. all 55 individuals, to give the reader a sense of the sample size involved in this survey.

The panel of teachers who answered our online survey was quite diverse. First of all, the teaching experience of these people varies from less than 5 years to 40 years. As can be seen in the figure below, even though the 55 respondents are distributed quite evenly in all five categories, the results show the majority of them, i.e. 23.6% (13 teachers), have been teaching for 11 to 20 years. The second most represented groups count 11 teachers each and concern those with an experience ranging from 6 to 10 years, from 21 to 30 years, and from 31 to 40 years. The least represented category concerns teachers who have been teaching for less than 5 years, which represent 16.4% (9 teachers) of the respondents.



Graph 1: Distribution of the responses to the question 'How many years have you been teaching?'

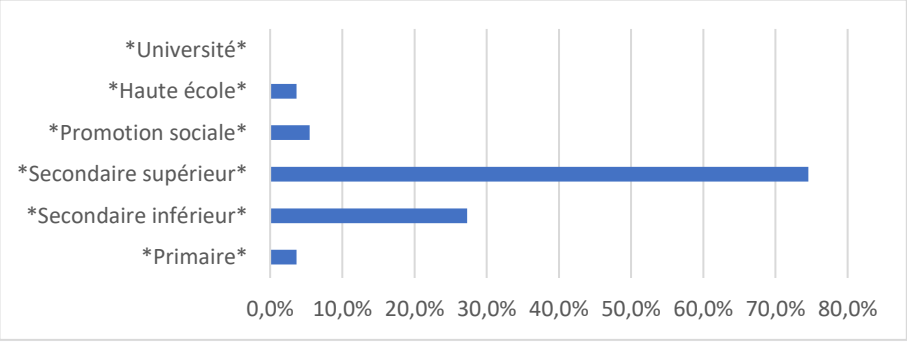
Regarding the education networks of the WBF (see *3.1 General outline* for an explanation of these school networks), it seems interesting to represent the different ones in which the respondents work. This distribution is represented in the graph below:



Graph 2: Distribution of the responses to the question 'In which network(s) do you teach?'

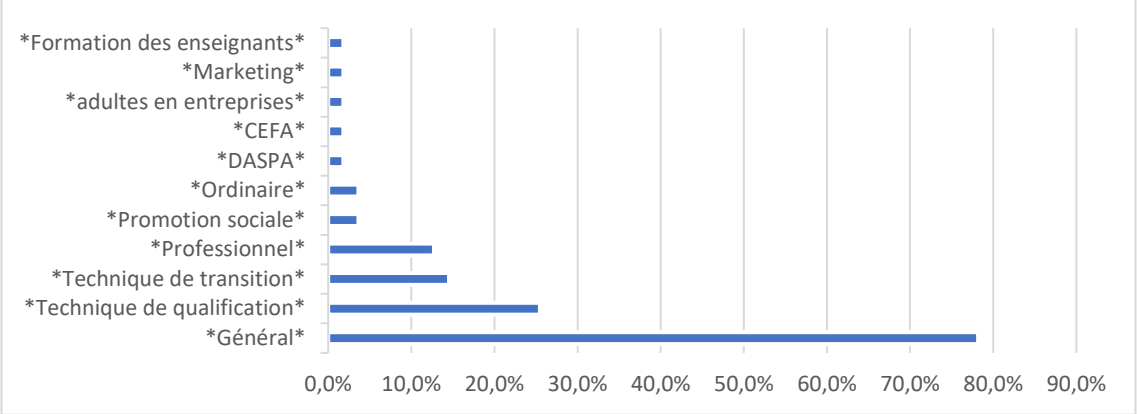
The majority of the respondents comes from two different networks: a huge majority comes from the free confessional network (35 teachers) whereas the secondly most represented group of respondents (16 teachers) is employed by the official network organized directly by the WBF. The other school networks were far less represented with only four teachers working in schools managed by the communes and provinces and one of them coming from the free non-confessional network. Let us note that respondents were able to choose more than one answer because some of them work in different school networks at the same time. Therefore, one person answered that they are working in both sub-categories of the official school network, which explains why the total of teachers in this paragraph equals 56 and not 55.

With regards to the education levels and types, *Graph 3* and *Graph 4* below demonstrates that a significant part of the respondents teaches in the last three years of secondary education (74.5%) and that the majority of them teaches to secondary-school students in general education (78.2%).



Graph 3: Distribution of the responses to the question 'At what level(s)/degree(s) do you teach?'

Concerning the other most represented education levels, the second majority of our respondents teach in the first three years of secondary education (27.3%), whereas the remaining minorities teach either in adult tertiary education, with 5.5% in what is called *promotion sociale* and 3.6% in higher education institution, or in elementary education (3.6%).

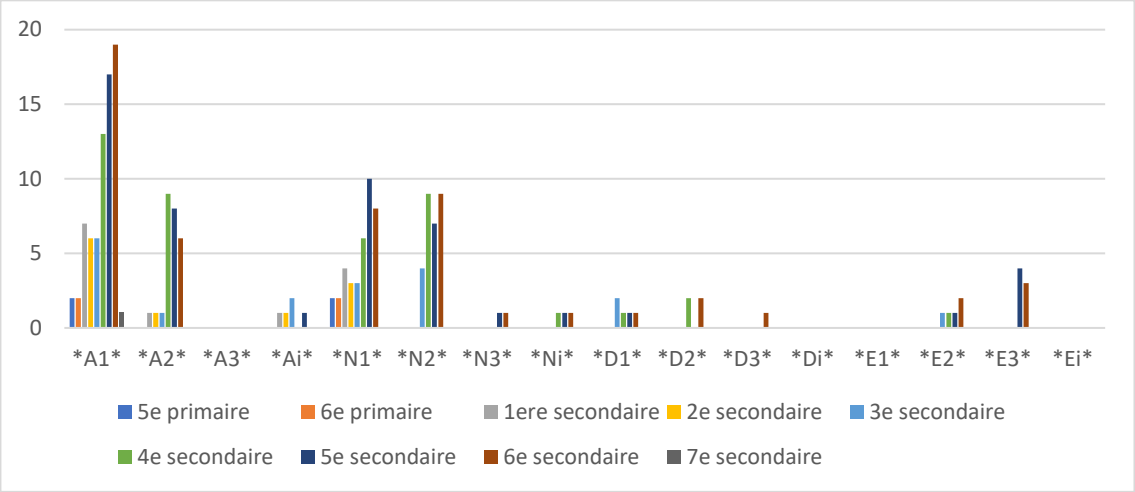


Graph 4: Distribution of the responses to the question 'In what type(s) of education do you teach?'

Regarding the education types (see *Graph 4*) in which the respondent of this survey work, figures show that 40% of the respondents teach in technical education, among which 25.5% and 14.5% respectively teach in *enseignement de qualification* and *enseignement de transition*. Then, 12.7% of the respondents also teach in vocational education. The respondents working in *ordinaire* education, i.e. 3.6%, correspond to those teaching elementary students. The other respondents were minorities (1.8% each), either teaching in DASPA[79], CEFA[80], or teaching to adults in diverse disciplines. Let us note that none of the respondents teaches in artistic education. For this and other reasons (see *4.4 Limitations of the survey*), the conclusions that will be drawn cannot be generalized. Also, the fact that few teachers from elementary instruction (2 people) answered our survey does not give enough insight into the teaching of RCS at the beginning of FL instruction to draw general conclusions. However, these respondents' answers will be analyzed anyway as they may be of interest to see if they are in line with secondary-school teachers' responses regarding explicit RCS instruction.

Finally, the most frequently taught language among the respondents is English (78.2%), followed by Dutch (65.5%), Spanish (12.7%), German (9.1%), and FL French (1.8%). The following graph represents the respondent's answers in relation to the classes in which they teach and also provides insight into the language level taught by teachers (LM1, LM2, LM3):

[79] DASPA is the acronym for Dispositif d'Accueil et de Scolarisation des élèves primo-arrivants.
[80] CEFA is the acronym for Centre d'Education et de Formation en Alternance.

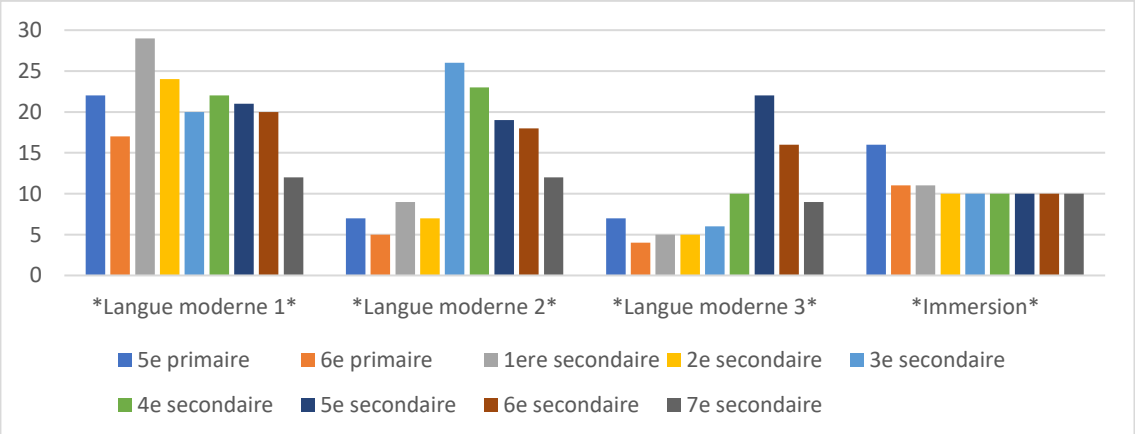


Graph 5: Distribution of the responses to the question 'This year, I am teaching students in ... in a course of ...'[81]

4.3 Results and discussion

Overall, only fifty-two respondents out of the fifty-five, i.e. two teachers of the elementary level and fifty teachers that work in secondary schools, were relevant to this questionnaire on the explicit teaching of RCS. In this section, I will present and analyze the data collected in order to draw conclusions in the last part of this chapter. I will also confirm or refute the hypotheses mentioned earlier linked to the explicit teaching of RCS by WBF teachers.

As explained earlier, the first questions were designed to give an overview of the teachers' general opinion on the topic of RCS. The following graph represents the number of teachers expressing the different levels at which they think the teaching of RCS should be given a place:

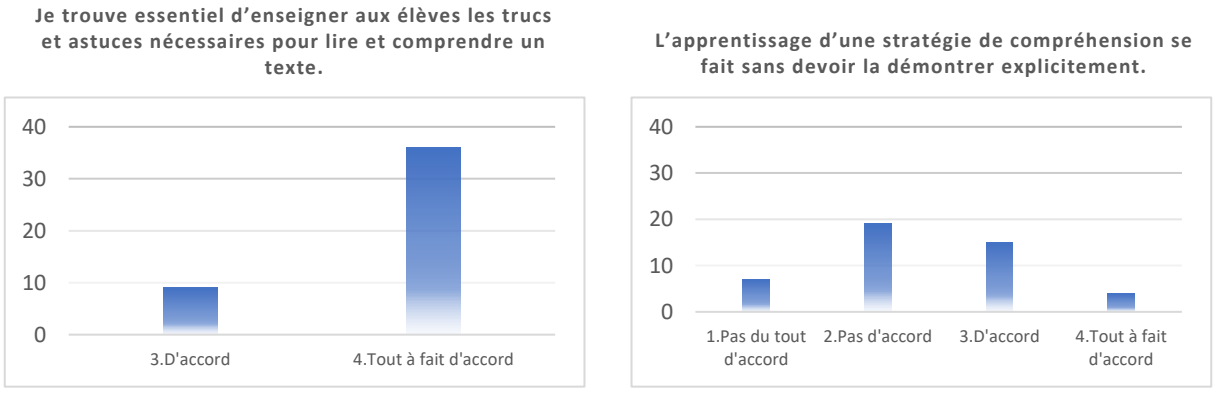


Graph 6: WBF teachers' general opinion on the place of teaching RCS

[81] In this graph, A is English, N is Dutch, D is German, I is Italian, and E is Spanish. Also, 1 corresponds to LM1, 2 to LM2, 3 to LM3, and i to immersion education.

Consequently, the collection of data for all language levels leads us to assume that regardless of their language level or their age, teachers think the students in front of them should be (made) familiar with the strategic dimension. In fact, in the few comments left in the section provided for this question, some respondents write that RCS have a rightful place at all levels. Moreover, some respondents insist that instruction in strategies should begin as early as possible and continue throughout the language learning process making a noteworthy link with *Graph 6* and what has already been stated before (see *2.1.3 Explicit teaching* pp. 35-36). Indeed, each peak is at the beginning of the learning of each language level. In fact, the learning of a LM1 begins in the first year of secondary school where twenty-nine teachers, i.e. 55.8% of our respondents, give it an important place and the learning of a LM2 generally begins at the beginning of the third year where twenty-six teachers, i.e. 50%, give an important place to strategies. The same observations can be made for LM3 and immersion instruction where FL learning begins in the fifth year of secondary school and fifth grade of elementary school respectively, where twenty-two and sixteen teachers, i.e. 42.3% and 30.8%, seem to think that strategies have a rightful place.

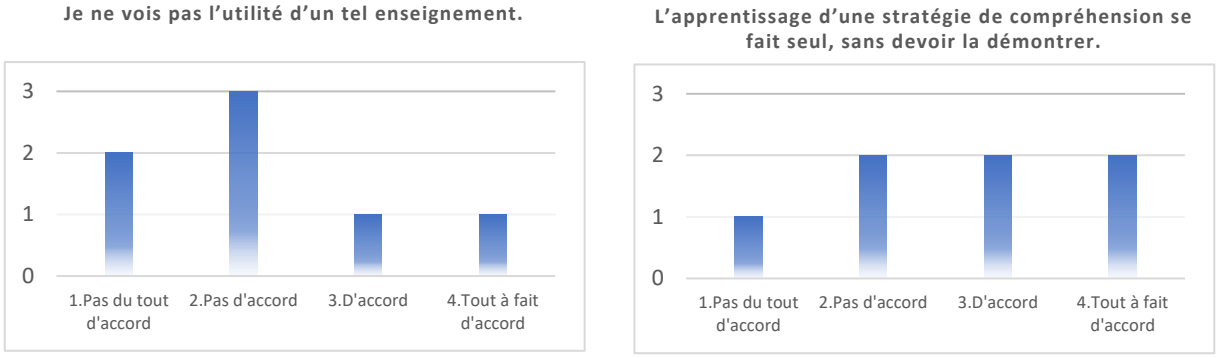
The most crucial question of the survey then asks whether or not the participant works on RCS with their students. To this question, forty-five teachers (86.5%) answered positively. The following graphs also show that, not only do they work on RCS in their classroom, but those teachers also find the strategies essential and disagree for the most part that RCS do not need to be explicitly demonstrated.



Graph 7: Levels of agreement with 'I find it essential to teach students the tips and tricks necessary to read and comprehend text' and 'Learning a comprehension strategy happens without having to demonstrate it explicitly'

Indeed, all forty-five respondents positively agree with the first statement and seem to think that RCS are necessary whereas seven and nineteen (57.8%) teachers disagree with the second statement and seem to think that RCS must be explicitly demonstrated.

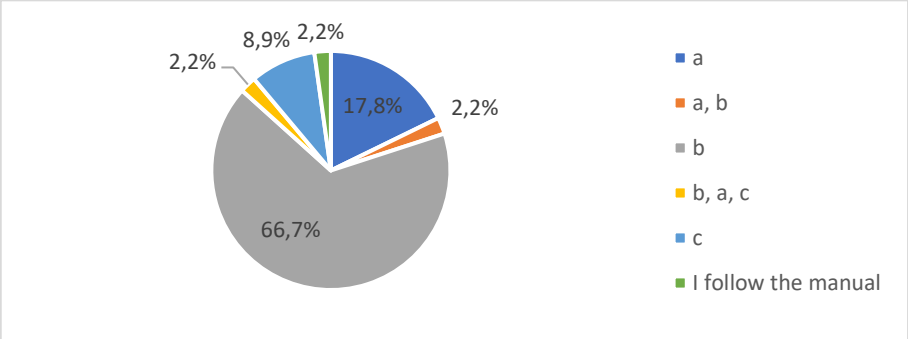
Still, this does not allow me to confirm **H6.1** (*As RCS are a recurring theme in the official documents of the WBF and in the literature, all WBF teachers are familiar with the notion and explicitly teach RCS in their classrooms*). Indeed, most respondents report being familiar with RCS and teaching them in the classroom, but seven remaining teachers (13.5%) responded negatively and proved that there are also teachers who do not work on the strategic dimension of RC with their students. However, when these respondents are asked about the reasons of their choice, most of them (71.4%) disagree with the statement that one reason is that they do not see the need for such teaching (see *Graph 8*). Still, 57.1% of them claim that students can learn the strategic dimension on their own because RCS do not need to be explicitly demonstrated (see *Graph 8*), which is a bit contradictory.



Graph 8: Levels of agreement with 'I do not see the need for such teaching' and 'Learning a comprehension strategy is done on one's own, without having to demonstrate it'

Additionally, the **H6.1** hypothesis asserts that teachers who are familiar with the concept of strategy teach them explicitly.[82] Nevertheless, the data collected through the questionnaire prove that WBF respondents actually teach RCS only partly explicitly or not at all.[83] Indeed, when asked what they do when they work on RCS, the following graph shows that none of the forty-five teachers states that they go through the stages of modelling (a), guided practice (b), and self-directed practice (c) in this order (see *2.1.3 Explicit teaching*). On the contrary, as can be derived from *Graph 9*, most of the respondents (66.7%, i.e. 30 teachers) claim they only create exercises focused on specific strategies to help students apply them, which corresponds to the guided practice of Gauthier et al. (2013). Others only report going through the modelling stage (17.8%, i.e. 8 teachers) or the self-directed practice (8.9%, i.e. 4 teachers).

[82] Note that teachers who do not teach RCS in their classrooms do not claim to be strangers to the notion but, as they do not work on the strategic dimension, they were not taken into account for the following analysis.
[83] This statement is based on the term explicit teaching as defined by Gauthier et al. (2013) and described in this MA thesis.



a = *I perform the task in front of the students and describe what I am doing while I am doing it.* (*modelling*); b = *I guide students in completing the task through focused exercises.* (*guided practice*); c = *Students spontaneously complete the task in a new reading task.* (*self-directed practice*)

Graph 9: WBF teachers' ways to work on strategic resources in the context of reading comprehension

Noteworthy is the fact that one respondent claims going through two stages of explicit RCS instruction and another respondent goes through all the stages of explicit teaching in the wrong order (2.2%). Interestingly enough, one respondent (2.2%) also states that they follow the manual to teach RCS which reflects that some methodology may be present in FL textbooks.[84] Therefore, these analyses allow me to completely refute the first hypothesis put forward in this research (**H6.1** *As RCS are a recurring theme in the official documents of the WBF and in the literature, all WBF teachers are familiar with the notion and explicitly teach RCS in their classrooms*); all WBF teachers may be familiar with RCS but all of them do not teach this notion in class. Besides, if they do, they do not automatically entirely teach strategies explicitly.

Subsequently, since our respondents still claim to find explicit instruction in RCS necessary, more data had to be analyzed in an attempt to find the possible reasons behind the reluctance to provide such instruction. The hypotheses (**H6.2**, **H6.3**, **H6.4**, **H6.5**) put forward concerned the alleged time-consuming character of the explicit teaching of RCS, the lack of methodology linked to it, its presumably simplistic side, and the difference in teaching the consequences of the difference in training and the documents consulted between the WBF teachers. When putting together the data collected with the questionnaire, *Table 12* is obtained.

[84] It would have been interesting to analyze different FL textbooks to find out if they managed to overcome the lack of methodological indications given to teachers by the official documents, but this was not done in the framework of this work.

		strongly disagree	*disagree*	*agree*	*strongly agree*
I work on some RCS in my classroom	Teaching comprehension strategies takes too much time.	20%	44.4%	26.7%	8.9%
	I have been familiarized with reading comprehension strategies thanks to official documents (programs, reference frameworks...).	42.2%	31.1%	24.4%	2.2%
	I was introduced to comprehension strategies in my initial teacher training.	36.5%	20%	22.2%	22.2%
	I have been introduced to comprehension strategies in my ongoing training as a teacher.	28.9%	24.4%	33.3%	13.3%
	Since metacognitive work on reading comprehension strategies is most often done in the L1 (French), it is a waste of time for the FL class.	57.8%	26.7%	11.1%	4.4%
	Students find these types of activities that focus on reading comprehension strategies childish.	33.3%	37.8%	24.4%	4.4%
	Students enjoy activities that focus on reading comprehension strategies.	11.1%	53.3%	33.3%	2.2%
I do not work on RCS in my classroom	Teaching these strategies takes too much time.	0%	42.9%	28.6%	28.6%
	I was not introduced to comprehension strategies in my initial teacher training.	0%	14.3%	28.6%	57.1%
	I have not been introduced to comprehension strategies in my ongoing training as a teacher.	0%	14.3%	28.6%	57.1%
	Students do not enjoy the type of metacognitive activities that focus on comprehension strategies.	14.3%	14.3%	42.9%	28.6%
	Students find these types of activities childish.	14.3%	28.6%	42.9%	14.3%
	This metacognitive work is most often done in the L1 (French) and is therefore a waste of time for the FL course.	14.3%	28.6%	28.6%	28.6%

Table 12: Summary of most of the results collected with the questionnaire on RCS

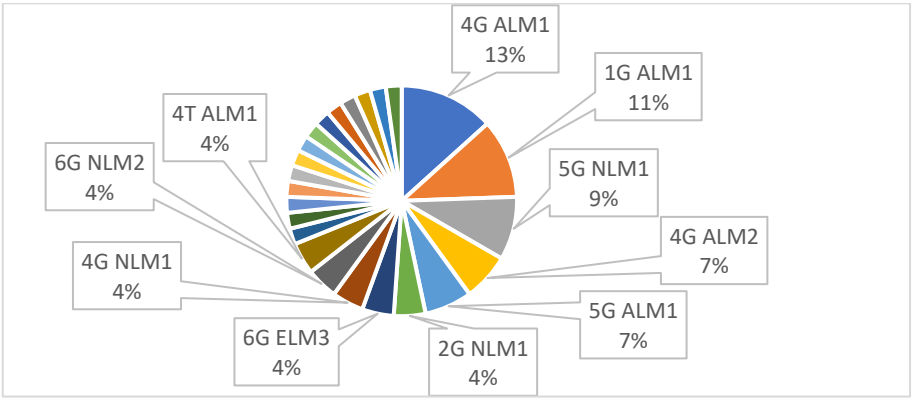
Concerning the fact that the explicit teaching of RCS might take too much time, most of the teachers that answered the survey do not allow me to confirm the hypothesis put forward in this MA thesis. On the one hand, *Table 12* highlights that twenty teachers in total, i.e. sixteen teaching RCS in class (26.7% and 8.9%) and four not doing so (28.6% and 28.6%), agree with the statement saying it takes too much time. On the other hand, more than half of the respondents disagree (even strongly) with the statement, i.e. 20% and 44.4% of the participants who teach RCS in class as well as 42.9% of the respondents who do not teach RCS. Therefore, the hypothesis which upholds that the explicit teaching of RCS takes too much time and that WBF teachers might see it as a waste of time is not confirmed. Those results can easily be understood; since most respondents say they teach RCS, it is also safe to say that they would not see its time-consuming character as a major drawback. Perhaps this means that WBF

teachers understand that RCS should not be the main focus of a reading lesson and that students and teachers should not spend too much time on them. In addition, if they have been teaching for a long time, teachers may also have found ways to teach RCS that do not take up much time and fit well into their courses. In the end, these results reflect good practice and do not support the **$H_{6.2}$** hypothesis (*WBF teachers think the explicitly teaching of RCS to students takes too much time*).

To the statements pertaining to the lack of methodological guidelines provided by their training, the majority of the teachers who do not teach RCS (57.1%) indicate that one of the reasons could be their lack of exposure to the strategic dimension either in their initial or during their ongoing training. Still, 14.3% of them disagree with this statement. Similarly, the majority of respondents who teach RCS to their students, i.e. 42.2% and 31.1% (thirty-three teachers), disagree with the statement that they have been familiarized with the strategies through the official documents. Twenty-five of them also disagree with the fact that they were made familiar with the notion during their initial training. This is surprising since it was previously analyzed that the strategies are definitely present in the new official documents. Therefore, they are probably present in the initial training of teachers based on these same documents. This data could thus be related to the career seniority of the respondents then trained with the older literature which placed less emphasis on the strategic dimension. In fact, as mentioned earlier in *Graph 1* (see *4.2 Questionnaire respondent profile* p. 77), the teachers who were trained when the new programs were released in 2017, i.e. teachers with five years of career or less, are not predominantly represented in our sample. The majority of our respondents have therefore been trained with the old programs with less emphasis on strategies. This explains thus the difference in opinion on initial training and official documents. It is important to note that when the respondents are facing the statement which claims that they were familiarized with the strategic dimension during their ongoing training, the trend changes and most respondents feel that this is indeed the case. Although it was concluded that the strategy training courses were not specifically directed at FL teachers, this answer proves that the ongoing trainings are based on the new programs and that they probably have an impact on the working methods of nowadays WBF teachers. Therefore, the preceding analyses suggest that lack of methodology may be a factor in reluctance to teach strategies, but it would be an overstatement to say that this is the case for all teachers. The **$H_{6.3}$** hypothesis (*WBF teachers claim they lack methodological indications about the explicit teaching of RCS*) can still be confirmed. In addition, these analyses also partly confirm the **$H_{6.5}$** hypothesis (*The most recently trained WBF teachers might explicitly teach RCS to a larger extent than the teachers initially trained with the old documents*); the survey does not indicate whether or not teachers actually teach the

strategies to a greater extent, but it does indicate a difference in opinion among teachers that is likely related to their seniority in the profession.

Regarding the hypothesis about the presumably simplistic nature of RCS-related exercises, different statements were suggested to the respondents, to which their degree of agreement were measured. A majority of teachers who work on RCS, i.e. 57.8% and 26.7% (thirty-eight teachers), disagree that since these strategies are taught in French, it is a waste of time. This seems logical since they teach them and would not be tempted to teach something that wastes their time. As for the teachers who do not practice explicit teaching of RCS in class, opinions are divided. Indeed, 14.3% of them (1 teacher) do not consider teaching strategies as a waste of time at all while the rest of the respondents are equally divided between light consideration as a waste of time (2 teachers), no consideration as a waste of time (2 teachers), and total non-consideration as a waste of time (2 teachers). It is therefore very difficult to draw conclusions in this regard. Then, other statements were made in an attempt to find out if the respondents considered the strategies to be too simplistic. It turns out that 71.1% (33.3% and 37.8%) of the teachers practicing explicit RCS teaching do not think that students consider the exercises related to the strategies childish but most of them, i.e. 64.4%, agree that they might not appreciate this type of activity. This might thus suggest that other reasons may exist as to why there is a lack of interest in these exercises. Similarly, most of the respondents who do not teach RCS agree that students do not enjoy these types of activities and state that they may even find them childish. Accordingly, these analyses refute the first part of the **H6.4** hypothesis (*As RCS explicit teaching is mostly carried out in L1, it might appear to be rather simplistic at first glance and strategies would only be explicitly taught by WBF teachers at the elementary levels of language learning*). Concerning the fact that only teachers at the elementary level would teach strategies, the following graph shows that it is not necessarily the case.



Graph 10: Respondents' reference class for the completion of the questionnaire[85]

Indeed, 13% of the respondents teaching RCS took their fourth secondary general English LM1 class as a reference. This class is not at the beginning of the FL learning process. On the other hand, the second most represented reference class is the first year of general secondary English LM1, which would confirm the hypothesis because it is at the beginning of learning the FL. However, when we look at the most represented classes, the sample presents mainly fifth and fourth secondary classes.[86] In addition, when asked if they work on the strategies in classes other than the one taken as a reference, very few of the respondents cite early FL learning classes.[87] Therefore, these analyses completely refute the **H6.4** hypothesis. However, this data must also be viewed in the light of the fact that they concern only a small sample of WBF teachers (see *4.4 Limitations of the survey*).

Ultimately, a last hypothesis could arise from the fact that strategies are a component of the reading process and are difficult to avoid (see *2.1.1.2 The variables of the reading process*); some teachers might indeed encourage their students to make connections with images in the text or ask questions about their prior knowledge to anticipate the reading, for example, without realizing that, in this case, they are working on the strategic dimension of RC. They would therefore have been wrongly classified in the same category as teachers who do not teach strategies. However, the present survey does not verify such a hypothesis and only an observation of teaching methods in WBF classrooms would have allowed for further analysis.

[85] This graph is solely related to teachers who use and teach RCS in their classroom. To make this graph easier to read, some data labels have been removed. For more details about the reference classes see Q15 on the Excel spreadsheet in Appendix.
[86] It is important to note that teachers are given the chance to claim they explicitly teach RCS to lower-level classes at the end of the survey. However, these analyses assume that because they were not chosen as a reference class, teachers may practice less RCS teaching in them and consider that there is less to exploit for such a survey.
[87] See Q64 on the Excel spreadsheet in Appendix.

4.4 Limitations of the survey

Even though using a questionnaire is one of the most effective ways to collect data and conduct research (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010), it is worth noting that the very nature of this questionnaire seems problematic. First of all, as this questionnaire was administered online, I was not present with each respondent during its completion and therefore could not answer any potential questions. Although it was designed with questions that are as clear and understandable as possible, misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the questions can always contribute to inaccurate data. Then, another major disadvantage to using this kind of survey, which still needs to be cited in this section, concerns the motivation of the respondents. First, it is impossible to measure it and, if lacking, it may lead to superficial and/or unreliable responses (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). As mentioned above, the length of a questionnaire can also influence this motivation or have consequences on the respondent's fatigue. Therefore, it is recommended that a questionnaire should not exceed 30 minutes to complete and that it should not exceed three to four pages in length (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). Regrettably, we estimated the completion time for this 62-item questionnaire to be approximately 45 minutes. In addition to being well over the recommended 30 minutes, this feature was also reproached by our pre-testers. In the case of the present survey, I can assure that the length of the questionnaire had an impact on the motivation of the respondents because it is reflected in the lack of feedback from the respondents. Indeed, at the end of the questionnaire, they were asked to contact me if they were interested in the subject. Unfortunately, I did not receive any response, except for one who is a family relative and is, unfortunately, a teacher of French as a FL.

Secondly, Dörnyei & Taguchi identify what they call 'Social Desirability (or Prestige) Bias' as a disadvantage of questionnaires that motivates participants to use responses that do not really apply to them but rather responses that help them to be socially accepted (2010, p. 8). Plus, the fact that they knew this questionnaire was going to be read by academics, even though it was anonymous, could have been intimidating for some of them. For this reason, it must be said that this questionnaire analyzes declarative data that may pose a problem of reliability because it represents what teachers say they do in their classrooms and not necessarily what they actually do. Then, this questionnaire is also limited because of the scale it chooses to use. As discussed earlier, the tendency to over-agree on the Likert scale would produce responses that reflect a lack of agency (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). Consequently, this questionnaire was designed to limit this tendency, but there is no evidence that it worked.

Ultimately, it must be noted that the results presented show that many teachers explicitly teach RCS to their students, but this observation cannot be over-generalized because there are

only 52 responses. In addition, part of this sample is still biased in that a significant portion of the respondents come from the list of the University of Liege's internship supervisors. These people could be considered as not representative of the average teacher because, through the trainees and their contacts with the University, they receive updates about the new didactics trends and are likely to be more informed about RCS. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, the respondents might have chosen to answer this questionnaire because they are interested in the research topic. A research on a larger sample must therefore be conducted to have a more accurate representation of the use of RCS in the WBF. A research that compares the declarative data to the observed data in the classrooms could also be a good idea.

4.5 Conclusion

As already mentioned, the purpose of this survey was to evaluate the place devoted to RCS in WBF teachers' classrooms. Though it is crucial to highlight that the results cannot be generalized given the limited nature of the survey sample and the merely declarative nature of this research, this chapter attempted to answer two research questions, namely:

(6a)	Are teachers of the WBF familiar with the notion of comprehension strategies?
(6b)	If so, do they explicitly teach those when practicing reading comprehension in their classroom?

As far as the first research question is concerned, the hypothesis that I formulated consisted in the fact that WBF teachers were indeed familiar with the notion because it was present in the official documents and WBF reference frameworks (see chapter *3. Comprehension strategies in official documents and legal requirements of the Wallonia-Brussels federation*). Even though the results showed that some FL teachers do not integrate this strategic dimension in their course, it is not the case for the majority of the participants. It can thus be said that RCS are for the most part known in WBF. Furthermore, regarding the second research question (**6b**), the second part of the hypothesis consisted in saying that when RCS are taught, WBF teachers follow the three major steps of explicit teaching. As it has been demonstrated, it is not necessarily the case. Consequently, the answer to the second research question of this section is negative. With regard to the other analyses, hypotheses were put forward in an attempt to find out any reluctances towards RCS. The collected data demonstrated various reasons, none of which prevails on the others. Indeed, WBF teachers do not seem to think that teaching RCS is time-consuming. Therefore, they continue to work on the strategic dimension without seeing it as inefficient. However, since it was shown that WBF teachers do not necessarily teach explicitly, it is not clear from the survey whether teachers would find that

going through the stages of modelling, guided practice, and self-directed practice would be a waste of time. Then, as does the previous chapter, the respondents note a methodological shortcoming regarding the teaching of strategies in official documents and programs and confirm the proposed $\boldsymbol{H_{6.3}}$ hypothesis (*WBF teachers claim they lack methodological indications about the explicit teaching of RCS*). Furthermore, the hypothesis whereby the more experienced teachers would teach less RCS due to their initial training (itself based on older official documents that place less emphasis on the strategic dimension) could not be verified, but the survey allows us to note a difference of opinion between the youngest and most experienced teachers concerning official documents or initial training. Finally, the last hypothesis concerning the supposedly simplistic side of RCS teaching could not be fully verified either. Indeed, the respondents claim to think that students do not appreciate the exercises on the topic and some teachers even think that students sometimes find those exercises childish. However, none of the questions in the survey allow me to draw any conclusions about the actual teaching in the classroom, nor do they allow me to quantify the amount of practice given to lower levels of language learning to compare it with the practice given to students who have been learning the language for several years.

To conclude this questionnaire analysis, it is important to note that it would have been useful to see different teachers in their working environments in order to enrich my research with actual observations and minimize the gap between their beliefs about their practices and what they actually do in their classroom. Additionally, it would also have been interesting to test different exercises on RCS in class during one of my internships in order to verify their relative effectiveness. Though this school year's timing did not allow for experimentation, the following chapter attempts to illustrate a sequence of RCS exercises as I would teach them to my students when I become a teacher of the WBF.

5 FINAL METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES FOR THE TEACHING OF READING COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

The research conducted for this MA thesis shows that most WBF teachers who answered my questionnaire claim they teach and use RCS in class but lack clear guidelines and tools to do so explicitly. Indeed, the reference papers and other documents related to education that teachers should follow do not specifically include clear procedures or instructions for teaching the concept even though they insist on the strategical component of learning a new language. Furthermore, the results of the survey in the previous chapter show that WBF teachers attest to this methodological gap (see *4. Questionnaire on the use of comprehension strategies in Wallonia-Brussel federation's classrooms*). Although teachers may do a lot of reading and research on the subject, it takes a significant amount of time and work to do so. In this sense, and mainly because I thought it was enjoyable to be able to create something based on what I learned with this dissertation, my personal experiences while teaching during my internships, and my training within the didactic Master in Germanic Languages and Letters at the University of Liege, I decided to create my own series of exercises focusing on one RCS in particular. Indeed, after participating in a videoconference presenting a specific FESeC pedagogical tool, I decided to use it as inspiration to attempt to illustrate the explicit teaching of the summarizing strategy. This chapter of my dissertation first briefly presents the tool's subdivision dedicated to RC in order to base the construction of my exercises on solid ground. It then describes and comments on the exercise designed for this dissertation. The objective of creating this is to try to find an example of answer to the problem mentioned in the introduction of this MA thesis: How to effectively implement explicit teaching of reading comprehension strategies in secondary-school classes learning a FL in the WBF? Besides, this chapter, which stems from various findings on the teaching of strategic skills to learners, could serve as a starting point for further research and experimentation.

5.1 Preliminary reflections

Before undertaking the design of the exercises on summarizing, I focused my reflection on a pedagogical tool released by the FESeC in early 2021 entitled *Développer les stratégies de communication au cœur de la séquence de cours*. It focuses its attention on the explicit teaching of strategies within receptive skills activities.[88] This tool seeks to be anchored in the FL program, which is itself based on the (inter-network) reference frameworks based on the CEFR. Given that strategies are spoken of as a necessity for communication in the latter, it is judicious

[88] This tool can be found on the internet under this link: https://padlet.com/veronique_alexis/qn0vpaxk54tr1k72

for the FESeC to develop the strategic dimension to help students and teachers in collaboration. Furthermore, the pedagogical advisors who presented this tool during the videoconference also attest to its mission, i.e. to fill a certain methodological gap in the official documents, making the link with what has been previously noted in this MA thesis. This document gives teachers examples of activities to practice strategies within the different language skills. Each example of activity closes up on one specific UAA and proposes a series of exercises. Those aim, on the one hand, to help the teacher equip the students with tools to understand better, and on the other hand, to make students aware both of the help that strategies provide and of the fact that they can be reproduced in other communication situations.

Regarding the RC activities in this document, the proposed exercises mainly work on the RCS which help to frame the reading by formulating hypotheses for example, i.e. those carried out before the exercise. It also focuses on those carried out after the comprehension exercise, which serve to verify the hypotheses formulated by the students. More specifically, the tool offers texts for which exercises are proposed and that invite students to activate their prior knowledge, cultivate their vocabulary, or increase their reading rate by focusing on the paratext. It also provides exercise formulations for each text to help students evaluate their progress and verify the consistency of their answers.

Although this tool seems to be a huge step forward towards remedying the methodological gap concerning RCS mentioned in this MA thesis, it is still very new and no feedback on it is to be found. Besides, although it would be presumptuous of me to criticize a tool made by people who certainly have more experience than I do, I cannot help but notice that it slightly lacks a theoretical anchor. By creating my own exercises at the end of this dissertation, it is precisely what I am trying to remedy. Moreover, as it was specified in this MA thesis, the list of existing strategies is long and some of them (presented in this work) are not worked on by the tool. Therefore, my exercises on RCS tries to focus on one of these missing strategies as well.

5.2 Purpose of my experimental RCS exercises

As mentioned in the theoretical framework of this work, not all students are equipped in the same way with regard to strategies, even if some of them seem to master many of those. This is why a wider range of strategy practice can be beneficial to all types of students and allow them to find the strategies that are most effective for them and best suited to their learning style. Furthermore, it is not possible to know how students will use the FL in the future. My role as a future teacher is to provide them with equal opportunities to develop their language skills

independently and more specifically, in the framework of this MA thesis, to provide them with the necessary tools to reach a better level in RC. In this sense, I remain convinced that the summary strategy (among others), which is missing from the FESeC tool, has to be worked on. Indeed, it can be adapted to other subjects and thus serve the students for their future learning.

The exercises created for this dissertation are based on a particular sequence of the tool (see *Appendix G*), which focuses on a text about the social network Instagram and is intended for students from A2+ to B1- level. It offers exercises to work on the following strategies:

- Call up topical knowledge.
- Identify key words, pictures, connectors, or (sub)titles.
- Write down hypothesis.
- Skim and scan a passage.
- Determine the importance of the different elements of the text.
- Verify hypotheses.
- Think aloud.
- Evaluate what one has learned with the text.

As already mentioned, the summarizing strategy in particular is missing from this sequence of exercises. Therefore, this last chapter of my dissertation chooses to develop exercises to help teachers give students the proper techniques to allow for a deeper understanding of the text by learning how to rephrase it or its main ideas. The purpose of these exercises is to offer methodological paths to use as a teacher. Besides, those exercises are intended to be adaptable to other texts and therefore only mean to serve as examples of activities.

5.3 Structure and design

The strategy of summarizing the text aims to teach students to use the information retained after identifying the main idea(s) to write a summary. This strategy builds on other strategies, which should also be taught, such as identifying important elements and details of the text and identifying the form of the text and especially its division into paragraphs. In these exercises, the teacher is offered instructions that help students distinguish between important and less important information and has to explicitly show students how to make a note plan on which to base a summary.

Before beginning, students should reflect on and be made aware of the usefulness of text summaries with the following instruction:

1. What is the purpose of a summary?

……

2. When is a summary needed?

……

They could formulate answers such as the following:

- 1. It forces us to verify what we understand;
- 1. It forces us to formulate what we read in our own words;
- 1. If we are unable to summarize a passage, it is probably because we have not understood it;
- 2. During a test;
- 2. To summarize a lesson before exams.

Students should also be made aware that the ability to summarize a text can be useful for other subjects and help understand other texts they might read. More importantly, with these exercises, they must realize that the strategies are applicable outside the education context.

Then, with the help of a checklist like the one below, the teacher should guide the students to make a note plan that will allow them to summarize the text; first by doing it in front of them, i.e. modeling, then by doing it with them, i.e. guided practice, and then by letting them do it with or without a help sheet, i.e. self-directed practice.

3. Here are the steps to take to summarize your text. You can check the boxes to see what you still have to do.

☐ Select important details that support the main idea.
☐ Remove secondary details.
☐ Strike out redundant details.
☐ Replace a list of words or concepts with a single word.
☐ Rewrite in your own words.

It is also important to check in with students quickly after this lesson to ensure that they have retained the steps of this checklist so they will not need it in the future or so they can recreate it alone if they need it.

Another way to guide students in writing a summary is to have them write a note plan to picture the text. For each paragraph, an exercise such as the following can then be suggested:

4. For each paragraph of the text, complete the following table:

Key idea	
Detail 1	
Detail 2	

5. With this note plan, rewrite the paragraph in your own words.

Ultimately, as mentioned earlier in this work, the confrontation of ideas between students can also be beneficial to their understanding. Students should be divided into subgroups and given a peer evaluation sheet such as the following, which can then be used as a summary proofreader to allow them to modify their summary if necessary.

6. Listen while your partner reads their summary or you read it yourself. Here are some questions to evaluate your partner's summary:

☐ Did your partner write their summary in their words?
☐ Did they forget any of the main ideas of the text?
☐ Did you understand everything your partner read?
☐ Suggest ways to improve your partner's summary.

Switch roles and ask each other the same questions.

☐ Are there any elements in your partner's summary that contradict elements in your own summary?

If so, read the text again and correct your summaries together.

It is important to mention that students should be made aware that this discussion is meant to be constructive. Consequently, the teacher should be alert to possible mockery and go around the class to make sure the exercise is done seriously.

5.4 Conclusion

There are other strategies that allow one to approach the text in a more analytical way but I chose to create these activities on summarizing, which remains a tool to global reading. Though exercises on the summarizing strategy were missing from the FESeC tool, the ones created and presented above remain limited. Indeed, these exercises could regrettably not be tested with teachers and students of the WBF. It is therefore presumptuous to give it too much praise. It would be appropriate to test it with students in order to possibly modify it. In addition, although

I have researched the topic, my lack of experience in the teaching environment may be a hindrance to the reuse of this exercise. Ultimately, it is a fact that managing such exercises and activities can be a lot of extra work for WBF teachers. Therefore, it would be understandable if teachers did not choose to apply these exercises focusing on RCS every time they work the RC in class. However, this dissertation remains convinced that RCS are a valuable asset for students and that by working on them from time to time, teachers will save time in the future. Moreover, suggesting a panel of exercises which work on different strategies also give the students more autonomy in the way they read texts, which in the end is more equitable as all students are given the chance to understand what they read in the FL.

6 CONCLUSION:

This dissertation aimed to learn more about FL RC and how it is taught, with a particular focus on how to effectively implement explicit teaching of RCS in secondary-school classes learning a FL in the WBF. Students are faced with texts containing more and more information, which they might not understand if they are not given the correct tools to analyze them with a critical mind and spirit. This research helps highlight the impact a teacher can have by giving them these valuable tools.

It was first necessary to define the concepts of RC, RCS, and explicit teaching in order to develop an operational definition of such instruction. Then, by means of quantitative and qualitative analyses of official WBF documents and training courses related to teaching, but also by means of a questionnaire addressed to current WBF teachers, it was possible to embark on this thorough work. Several hypotheses were put forward to guide the analyses. Overall, the results of such analyses indicated a methodological gap in the teaching of strategies and confirmed one of the hypotheses. Indeed, most teachers know what strategies are, as they are even present in the curricula, but seem to be lost when it comes to teaching them. It was then appropriate to try to compensate for such a lack by looking for a methodological approach to the explicit teaching of strategies. Therefore, I created my new personal exercises based on a pre-existing tool. Unfortunately, it is important to note that these exercises can only work as a methodological approach as they have never been tested. Still, they allow to highlight and illustrate the different conclusions drawn throughout this work.

In general, this work states that RCS must, first, be implemented as early as possible in the learning of the FL to allow students to reach good reading skills. Secondly, these strategies must be taught in an explicit way by first being demonstrated by the teacher, then tested by the students with the help of the teacher, and finally tested independently. Moreover, one must be aware of the many strategies that can be applied to the comprehension of new texts. However, each student is different and it is therefore recommended to let them find and choose the strategies that are most useful and effective for them. This is why students' use of RCS should not be tested. Let us note that this MA thesis was mainly theoretical and most of the results cannot be generalized. However, in this new perspective, it would be relevant to carry out more precise studies in the WBF classrooms, as well as an experimentation focusing on the exercises created at the end of this research. In other words, it would be interesting to see whether explicit repetitive teaching would automate the application of comprehension strategies in the long term.

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