

TITLE: The ability to read and comprehend Swedish print
SWEDISH TITLE: Att läsa och förstå svenska. Läsförmågan hos elever i årskurs 9 i Borås 2000–2002
LANGUAGE: Swedish (English summary)
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Abstract

This work consists of two parts. The first part is an attempt to summarize decoding oriented research during the past 30 years reflected through a combination of Vygotsky's semiotics and the Piagetian notion of 'mental operations'. These abilities are crucial for the ability to cope with human signs, especially those used in print. The second part provides an assessment of junior high school students' (aged about 16) reading ability in and around the Swedish town of Borås during 2000–2002.

The results show that there is a correlation between grades and reading ability, as my interpretation of Vygotsky's semiotics and Piaget's notion of mental operations would predict. Reading ability in Borås decreased during the period 2000–2002. There are studies conducted on a national level that confirm that this tendency is not restricted to Borås (see IEA 2001). Due to increasing screen use, e.g., watching TV and video or playing computer games, reading at home decreased as students' "snatch and grab" philosophy probably made them less willing to undergo learning processes that take years to master. In addition, the school system in Sweden went through rapid and thorough changes during the 1990s. As a consequence, financial resources for educational purposes as well as the number of trained and experienced teachers decreased. Further, the results confirmed that girls are better readers than boys.

KEY WORDS: Literacy, reading ability, decoding, cognition, semiotics, Vygotsky, Piaget, gender, grades.

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