German Adult Literacy Level One Survey 2017/18

Concept and Methodological Approach

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German Adult Literacy Level One Survey 2017/18

1. Adult literacy, level one and participation

2. Research questions

3. Methodology of the literacy skills assessment

4. Background questionnaire on literacy practices and participation

5. Conclusion and discussion
Adult literacy, level one and participation

- International literacy assessments:
  IALS (OECD 2000), PIAAC (OECD 2013): five levels of literacy proficiency
- German literacy assessment:
  Leo Level One Survey (Grotlüschen/Riekmann 2012): Alpha Levels
- LSAL – literacy proficiency and literacy practices (Reder)

- Low levels of literacy lead to low rates of skill use and to low participation (social, occupation).
- **But**: At individual level, individuals with low literacy skills are not necessarily excluded from work and social life. (Grotlüschen, Riekmann & Buddeberg 2015).
- **And**: They are not necessarily excluded from skill use.
Level One and Alpha Levels (LEO-Survey)

Lower rungs approach

I = Level One

\( \alpha_1 \)
\( \alpha_2 \)
\( \alpha_3 \)
\( \alpha_4 \)

IV / V

III

II

I = Level One
7.5 million functional illiterates in Germany
14.5% of working-age population

0.3 M.       2.0 M.       5.2 M.       13.3 M.         30.8 M.
0.6%     3.9%        10%        25.9%       59.7%
α 1            α 2            α 3            α 4            >α 4

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Structure of functional illiteracy (LEO)

- 57% of functional illiterates are employed, 17% are unemployed
- 58% are German native speakers
- 80% reached a school leaving certificate
- Older age groups are more often affected than younger age groups: A third is more than fifty years old (skill loss?)
- Males (ca. 60%) are more often affected than women (ca. 40%)

→ On average, popular clichés and stereotypes about functional illiterates (very low literacy proficiency, unemployed, socially isolated, negative schooling experience) do not hold.

(Grotlüschen, Riekmann, & Buddeberg 2015)
LEO 2017/18: Research questions

1. What literacy skills do people have in Germany?
   → Proportion of functional illiterates / low literate adults in Germany
     (plus trend analysis / plus linking with PIAAC)

2. Do low literacy skills necessarily lead to social exclusion and failed participation?
   In case of low literacy proficiency, what kind of skill use and skill practices can be found?
   → Interrelation of literacy proficiency, literacy practices and participation in everyday life and work (several literacy domains)
LEO 2017/18: Methodology

• Household survey
• Sample size: n=5,000 plus 500 with low educational level
• Assessment of reading and writing skills (Alpha Levels) using the lower rungs approach
• Items have partly been used in LEO 2011. A part of the items will be replaced by new items
• Item Response Theory (Rasch model, Plausible Values)
Background Questionnaire: literacy practices and participation

Literacy ...

... is not only a set of (cognitive) **skills**, but a **social practice** (Street 1992; Barton/Hamilton 2000).

... involves not **reading and writing** only, but also **further knowledge, skills, attitudes**, that are crucial for meeting the demands of everyday life and at the workplace.

... can be **limited** to requirements of everyday life and work, or can be **expanded** to concepts that aim at critical thinking, meaningful action, and emancipation (UIE 2005, p. 5)
BQ on literacy practices and participation

• Sociodemographic characteristics
• Digital literacy
• Health literacy and information searching behaviour
• Political literacy, participation and engagement, migration and refugees
• Financial literacy, money management and consumption
• Work-related literacy and job seeking
• Family literacy, parent education and foreign languages
• Further education: participation, wishes and needs
Example: Digital literacy

1. Digital literacy practices
   • Reading and writing
   • Oral practices
     (also: visual, video, pictures)

2. Awareness and knowledge
Digital Literacy: Practices

Questions focusing literacy practices in the area of digital media

• **Reading and writing digital practices:**
  – (How) do you write emails/text messages? Do you care for spelling, are you good in spelling? Do you feel ashamed of texting or avoid it because of poor spelling skills? Which style do you use?
  – Do you use online banking, job boards, neighbourhood boards?
  – Do you use dating platforms, couchsurfing or airbnb?
  – Do you buy online tickets for cultural events (cinema, theatre, festivals), train, flight, journeys?
  – Do you read and write in social media? Which way? Why? What do you avoid?
  – Do you need assistance for fulfilling these tasks? If so, which kind of assistance?
Digital Literacy: Practices

Questions focusing literacy practices in the area of digital media

• **Oral digital practices:**
  – Do you use voicemail (with whatsapp or threema)? (why / why not?)
  – Why don’t you call?
  – Do you use acoustic control such as Siri or S Voice? (why / why not?)
  – Do you use navigation devices and if so, do you give the commando orally?
  – Do you take photos, videos and share them with others? Do you upload them onto youtube?
  – Do you use youtube channels? Do you play online games? Are you a member of online gaming communities?
Digital Literacy: Knowledge/awareness

Questions focusing on digital literacy in the sense of basic and critical abilities to make use of digital media

• Knowledge/awareness in the field of digital literacy
  – How do you handle group pressure?
  – How do you handle security problems?
  – How do you handle data grabbing and personalized advertisement?
  – Do you know about ways to enhance internet security (browser settings, firewalls, ...)?
Health Literacy: Practices

Questions focusing on Literacy Practices in the area of Health

• **Reading and writing health practices:**
  – Do you look up in the package insert for instructions to use for pharmaceuticals?
  – Do you search for information *after* your doctor told you that you are ill and you do not know the disease? Do you search information about symptoms *before* you decide to go to the doctor?
  – Do you search for information about nutrition behaviour and physical activity?
  – Do you need assistance for fulfilling these tasks? If so, which kind of assistance?

• **Oral health practices:**
  – Do you ask pharmacists for information what to do if you are ill? Do you ask friends or family members?
  – Do you try something and watch whether it helps to feel good?
Health Literacy: Knowledge/awareness

Questions focusing on health literacy in the sense of basic (and critical) abilities to cope with health issues (Reference system: Ottawa Charter, Siegrist, PIAAC Health Literacy)

- **Knowledge/awareness in the field of Health Literacy:**
  - Five green leafy vegetables a day? Nutrition chain and pyramid?
  - (How) do you cope with physical and psychological stress?
  - Collective action against circumstances that affect health (at the workplace, in the neighbourhood)
  - Knowledge about vaccine, bacteria and antibiotics? HIV?
  - Do you have an organ donor card?
  - Advance decision/ patient’s decision?
  - Do you have additional insurances, e.g. supplementary dental insurance?
Financial Literacy: Practices

Questions focusing on literacy/numeracy practices in the area of finances

• **reading and writing financial practices:**
  – Do you regularly plan your monthly expenses or prepare a budget for your household?
  – Do you find it easy to understand financial documents regarding your bank account (credit or debit)?
  – Do you have a household budget?
  – Do you use online banking? (why / why not?)
  – Do you need assistance for fulfilling these tasks? If so, which kind of assistance?

• **oral financial practices:**
  – Do you use telephone banking? (why / why not?)
Financial Literacy: Knowledge/awareness

Questions focusing on financial literacy in the sense of basic (and critical) abilities to cope with financial issues

- **Knowledge/awareness in the field of financial literacy:**
  - Do you plan ahead (e.g. for retirement) and stay on track? Do you make ends meet?
  - How do you choose products and compare prices?
  - Did you take the credit offer from a shop or from a bank house? (why / why not?)
  - Did you ever buy a larger purchase by instalments?
  - Can you tell the difference between credit and debit interest?
  - Would you be able to pay an unexpected 300 € bill?
  - Do you have a private retirement provision?
Political Literacy: Practices

Questions focusing on literacy practices in the area of politics

- **Reading and writing political practices:**
  - Do you read the pros and cons and then participate in petitions or plebiscites?
  - Do you read announcements to demonstrations or socio-political events?
  - Do you write invitations, statements, blog entries or group emails for a non-profit group?
  - Do you regularly read more than the headlines in a newspaper, online news or blogs? Do you receive thematic newsletters or do you follow special interest groups in the web?
  - Do you need assistance for fulfilling these tasks? If so, which kind of assistance?

- **Oral political practices:**
  - Do you participate in a demonstration? (why / why not?)
  - Do you participate in political discussions?
Political Literacy: Knowledge/awareness

Questions focusing on political literacy in the sense of basic (and critical) abilities to cope with political issues (not Global Competence)

• Knowledge/awareness in the field of political literacy:
  – Are you interested in history or politics, if so, how do you act on this thematic interest?
  – Do you know where and at what time to find regular daily news on TV?
  – Do you pay attention to labels such as “organic” or “fair trade” while shopping?
  – Have you ever been invited to a citizens’ initiative?
  – Do you use your right to vote? (why / why not?)
  – Are you a member of a club, trade union, association, citizens’ initiative?
  – Do you do voluntary work? Which kind of?
  – Do you regularly help neighbours, friends or family members?
Conclusion and discussion
References


