□ **Articles**

Bernese Reading Primers from the 17th to the 19th Century*

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The aim of this contribution is to provide insight into 200 years of the history of primers from the canton of Bern, Switzerland. For that reason, the accessible German primers (i.e. the oldest preserved editions) that were printed between 1680 and 1876 by a Bernese publishing company are presented and analysed from the perspective of language didactics. The oldest Bernese primer serves as a starting point, this contribution terminates at the end of the 19th century, just before "The Century of the Child" begins. In the 20th century, primers were subject to major changes and became a "Book of the Child" (Schmack 1960, 38).

According to Grimm's dictionary, the common German denotation of *Fibel* [reading primer] derived from the word *Bibel* [bible] (Grimm & Grimm 2004) during the Reformation period, starting its course in the Low German language area, then heading to the south (Schmack 1960, 9). As regional variants, the terms *Namenbüchlein* [booklet of names] and *ABC-Buch* [ABC book] were in use, too. In Bern, the name changed over time: In the 17th and 18th century, primers were known as *Namenbüchlein*, in the beginning of the 19th century they changed to *ABC-Buch* or *Lesebuch* [reading book], and at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century they were, inter alia, referred to as *Fibel* [primer].

Primers are meant to acquaint children with written language. Apart from the common reading training, primers also include initial reading texts. These texts convey societal core values, social behaviours, and pedagogic matters (Hofen 2006, 150; Skjelbred et al. 2017, 9). Thus, primers are not only used for the mediation of written language, but also for the realisation of an educational mandate (Schmack 1960, 17).

Similarly to other European countries (for Germany, see e.g. Bartnitzky 2015; Gabele 2002; Teistler 2007, for Norway e.g. Skjelbred et al. 2017, for Sweden e.g. Willke 1963, for Europe e.g. Sroka 2011, 25) one can distinguish different types of primers, classified according to their primary educational goal:

1. Catechism primer [German: *Katechismusfibel*]: reading as access to religious texts
2. Enlightenment or rational primer [German: *Aufklärungsfibel*]: reading as access to moral values and formation of reason
3. Object primer [German: *Anschauungsfibel*]: reading and conception training

In sections one to three the analysed primers are assigned to these types, within the sections they are listed in chronological order. The description contains the composition and contents of the respective primer as well as the method of written language instruction. The Bernese primers are either working synthetically with the alphabet method or phonics, or analytic-synthetically with the keyword method.

1 Bernese Catechism Primers: Reading as Access to Religious Texts

The prototype of the catechism primer, published in various European countries and languages, consisted of a sheet in octavo format, which contained 16 pages when folded (a.o. Teistler 2007, 39; Skjelbred et al. 2017, 36). Within this small scope, the alphabet, syllables, and texts of catechism were presented in Fraktur; no pictures were included (with the only exception of the rear[1] or title page). This restriction on the introduction of the alphabet and first combinations for the teaching of basal reading skills on the one

Bernese Primers (continued)

hand, and hard to understand religious texts on the other hand, points to the fact that language teaching served religious purposes: pupils were supposed to learn reading in order to understand religious texts (Messerli 2002, 238). Until the beginning of the 19th century, children solely learnt reading upon starting school, only later might they acquire writing skills (Messerli 2002, 500), since it was not seen as necessary for the "salvation of one's soul" (Messerli 2002, 501). Therefore, writing skills were significantly less developed than reading skills (Messerli 1999, 310).

The catechism primers – in Bern in the spirit of the Reformation – are known as *Namenbüchlein*. They were published anonymously until the first third of the 19th century and taught reading with the alphabet method (Teistler 2007, 41; Skjelbred et al. 2017, 36). This means that the letter names were learnt in alphabetical order and constantly repeated for memorisation. For pupils, it was challenging to build a bridge from the names of letters in the alphabet to their phonetic sounds and to synthesise the letters.

After the introduction to the alphabet and first combinations, the following pages were dedicated to catechism, that is, the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the Ten Commandments, and other prayers. Hyphen or blank spaces between syllables were the only support for pupils to make a transition from reading simple syllables to complex texts. Since catechism primers offered poor support in two challenging transitions; firstly, from the alphabet names to the sound of letters for synthesis and secondly, from simple to complex words then to texts. Pupils heavily relied on their teachers' didactic quality. Taking into account that teacher training was still absent in these days, not all pupils acquired reading skills during school time. According to a survey among priests about the children's reading skills in 1806, approximately half of the children living in a rural area could not read at all or only marginally when leaving school (Wyss 1978, 281).

1.1 «Namenbüchlein mit underscheidenen kurtzen Silben sehr nutzlich und befürderlich zu lernen: für die Jugend der teutschen Schulen, der Statt und Landtschafft Bern» 1680

The oldest preserved Bernese primer from 1680 contains 16 pages, apart from the front page. The first two pages introduce the letters of the alphabet in lowercase, only the first letter A is capitalized. For each letter, there are three monosyllabic words. The first word is always a noun (usually a name) and thus capitalized, the two following words are lowercase. On the third page, the Lord's Prayer can be found. – This primer with its combination of two thirds reading training and one third prayer did not offer sufficient support for both learners and teachers. This reading primer was used by advanced schools and parents, who wanted to introduce pupils to catechism (Wyss 1978, 204).[1]

Image 1 – «Namenbüchlein mit underscheidenen kurtzen Silben sehr nutzlich und befürderlich zu lernen […]» 1680, front page, pp. 2 and 4 (University Library Bern)

Bernese Primers (continued)

1.2 «Namen-Büchlein, zur Unterweisung der jungen Kinder, samt dem Vater Unser, Glauben, und den Heiligen Zehen Geboten, nebst etlichen schönen Gebätten» 1773

Almost 100 years later, the next fully preserved primer with 24 imprinted pages appears. The reading training in Fraktur (the letters decreasing in size) occupies now 11 pages: It starts with the introduction of capital and lowercase letters, followed by reading units, ranging from two-letter combinations to mono- to multisyllabic words (still including names). The reading training part ends with the introduction of digits. The second part of this primer contains religious texts (Lord's Prayer, Creed, Ten Commandments, other prayers). In order to facilitate reading, blank spaces separated syllables, and commas separated words. A new feature appears on the last page, where teachers receive instructions to keep strict discipline and order. In comparison to the primer from 1680, pupils receive more exercises for the transition from letters to words. The combinations of vowels + consonants provide a first offer in the direction of phonics (see chapter 2).

This reading primer proved to be a classic[2]: Not only did a quite similar catechism primer already appear in 1778 (*Namenbüchlein zur Unterweisung der jungen Kinder samt nützlichen Lesübungen und Gebettern*"[3]), but in 1824 and 1837, almost unchanged reissues of the 1773 primer followed. In 1837 the primer was supplemented by a bonus volume with reading texts (*Kurze und leichte Erzählungen für kleine Kinder, zur Uebung im Lesen*). It is unlikely that this additional volume was already available for the edition from 1773. It is explained in the preface (1837, 2) that this volume was meant as a transition from reading primers to catechism, knowing that the latter was too difficult for children at this stage. In an additional 24 pages, 66 short texts are presented in Fraktur, which are without exception moralizing model texts. The content of this additional volume points to the Enlightenment primers presented in section 2. It is surprising that this primer has been reissued for so long, since at the end of the 18th and at the beginning of the 19th century, new primers had appeared already, which heralded the start of a new primer area due to fundamental innovation (see section 2).

In the second third of the 19th century, two additional primers appear as advancements of the catechism primer, they are closely linked to former primers due to the scope and presence of religious texts. However, these two additional primers produce fundamental innovations. The colourful pictures are particularly noticeable.[4] Since colourful printing is significantly more expensive, these primers were most likely not intended for schools, but for the use in bourgeois families (see Bartnitzky 2016, 3; Skjelbred et al. 2017, 44; Teistler 2007, 15f and 2015, 50 for the domestic use of ABC books).

1.3 «Neues ABC und Bilderbuch für die Jugend» 1836

The first rooster primer published in Bern (with the rooster on the front page) contains 16 unpaginated and partially illustrated pages. The second half of this primer bears striking similarities to the catechism primer, but the first one is more child-oriented and breaks new grounds in the introduction to written language. The first half of this volume is reminiscent of picture books due to numerous illustrations. The letters are provided in alphabetical order on one-third of the page. Such a page contains capitalized and lowercased letters as well as three nouns, which start with the respective letter; and, as an innovation, both illustrations for the three nouns and a double-spaced verse to one noun can be found (see image 2; the illustrations are manually coloured in the example of the University Library Bern).

Children get to know capitalized and lowercased letters in different Fraktura fonts; they probably already learnt the verses through listening to the teacher reciting them before learning to read them themselves. These verses are meant to provide pupils with worldly wisdom. Moreover, the rimes might have had the positive effect of improving phonological awareness.

Bernese Primers (continued)

The second half is clearly reminiscent of the 1824s' primer. It starts with a page where capitalized and lowercased letters are listed in different orders and fonts. What follows is a page with combinations of letters; no words or sentences are provided. It is probable that one came back to the first part of the primer to let the pupils read longer units (or one started with part two and the pupils were looking at the first half only afterwards).

After letter combinations, punctuation characters and a grammatical part follow (article inflection, personal pronouns, conjugation of "be"). Finally, this primer also works with texts at the end, however, contrary to the 1824s' primer, the texts start with a one-and-a-half page long moral tale *der fromme gottlieb* [the devout Gottlieb], it is just the last four pages that contain religious texts (Lord's Prayer and other prayers).

This primer combines old and new method of reading instruction, opening two options for teacher and pupil: While the second part remains with the alphabet method, the first part, which visualises the phonetic values of letters using images similar to an *Anlauttabelle* [ABC sound clues], clearly refers to the phonics method.

Image 2 – «Neues ABC und Bilderbuch für die Jugend» 1836, front page, p. 2 (University Library Bern)

1.4 «Neues Namenbüchlein, oder, Anleitung nach der Stufenfolge, oder, Auf eine leichte Art, und in kurzer Zeit richtig lesen zu lernen» between 1830 / 1850

In the middle of the 19th century, a new primer provided another transition point, which oriented itself on previous reading primers. This primer contains 24 pages, like the 1824 version, however, the content is completely new, apart from one page with prayers at the end of the primer. In addition, the text pages are complemented with eight sheets containing three coloured ABC pictures each (see image 3).

Contrary to former primers the alphabet is not introduced en bloc. Instead, vowels (sounds = letter names) are introduced and soon combined with different consonants (introduced according to their place of articulation). That means one was not working with the name of letters, but with the sounds of consonants. In a first overview, vowels are systematically combined with the labials [b], [p], [f], and [m]. Following this path, the other consonants are being introduced (alveolars, velars, and glottal stops). Afterwards the letters are being combined to longer letter combinations and monosyllabic words. In a next step, the majuscules, capitalized monosyllabic nouns with articles, and first sentences formed with words of increasing length follow. Subsequently, numerous child-oriented texts are provided. After the introduction of digits, the primer ends with six short prayers.

The pages with pictures match the text pages in regard to format. How the publications were delivered is untraceable (in the exemplar that is accessible

in the Swiss National Library the text and picture pages are integrated in a brochure.) Following the alphabet, each letter is introduced in a child-friendly way and a noun is provided (mostly an occupation or an animal).

This primer is characterised by four innovations: Firstly, the selected texts differ significantly from the ones presented in the previous primers. Religious texts (approximately 5%) are replaced with child-friendly texts that point to Enlightenment primers. Secondly, the introduction of letters is not in alphabetical order; vowels are introduced first and combined with consonants. Thirdly, the transition from sounds and single words to sentences and texts receives much more attention than in previous primers. Fourthly, the primers are supplemented with numerous appealing colourful illustrations, which facilitate the learning process. – The use of the more modern phonics points to the fact that this primer was established at a later stage than the 1836 primer, where the alphabet method was still in use.

Image 3 – «Neues Namenbüchlein, oder, Anleitung nach der Stufenfolge, oder, Auf eine leichte Art, und in kurzer Zeit richtig lesen zu lernen» between 1830 / 1850, front page, p. 2, supplement (Swiss National Library)

2 Bernese Enlightenment Primers: Reading as Access to Moral Values and Formation of Reason

In the canton of Bern, the way of thinking of the Enlightenment, supported by economical needs (Schmidt 2011, 432), began to have an impact on school since the end of the 18th century resp. the beginning of the 19th century. The acknowledgement of a necessity of an improved scholar education led to a development in teacher training (Scandola et al. 1992, 26), the introduction of mandatory schooling (1831[5]), and, last but not least, a change in learning materials. The aim of primary school was to develop and cultivate every child's facilities and strengths, so that it can fulfil its purpose as a human being, as a Christian, and as a citizen (first Bernese primary school law, 1835[6]).

The Bernese primers, no longer entitled as *Namenbüchlein*, but more frequently as *Lesebuch* [reading book], were vaster in scope due to an extension of the reading part. Religious texts were replaced with secularly, moral and ethical texts in the spirit of the Enlightenment period. Moralizing narratives with children as protagonists tied the link to the children's world of experience and exemplified morally correct behaviour. Since the 1830s, elementary language instruction expanded from the teaching of basal reading techniques to improved reading comprehension in combination with writing lessons according to the read-and-write method, which teaches both skills in functional correlation. Reading acquisition changed in approach, the alphabet method was replaced with phonics (sounds of letters). Sounds were learnt and linked to sound combinations at an early stage, therefore, the first critical transition

from letters to sounds, as well as the synthesis of the two, was intensively facilitated (see section 1). The letters and respectively their sounds (as in the 1830 / 1850 *Namenbüchlein*), were not learnt in alphabetical order, but with increasing level of difficulty (sometimes with regard to pronunciation, other times with regard to writing). The second critical transition from reading words to reading texts was systematically introduced. Children first learnt reading syllables, then words and sentences, and finally texts appropriate for children.

2.1 «*Neues ABC und Lesebuch für die Schweizerjugend von 5 bis 8 Jahren*» 1797, by Johann Georg Heinzmann

The first primer that can be categorised as reflection of the Enlightenment rather than catechism primer appears in Bern in 1797, and for the first time, the author's name is given. The primer is 134 pages long and clearly breaks with the catechism primers traditions. Already, the new title "ABC and reading book" and the age of the target group point to the fact that Heinzmann's primer was not supposed to simply teach basal reading techniques as the authors of the catechism primers did, but that his book was meant to support pupils over a longer period of time and introduce them to reading comprehension. The primer's foreword points to the new zeitgeist:

> *Die Nothwendigkeit eines verbesserten Schulunterrichts, sonderlich auf dem Lande, fühlt man bey uns nun immer stärker und stärker, je nothwendiger es wird, die Leute durch Vernunft und Tugend den Gesetzen und ihren Pflichten getreu zu erhalten. (1797, 2)*
>
> [Especially in the countryside, one feels an increasing necessity of an improved school education since it becomes more and more necessary to keep the people's faithfulness in law and duties through reason and virtue.]

The reading training firmly adheres to the traditional alphabet method and starts with a listing of the alphabet (in Fraktur, Kurrent, and Antiqua script, at the end, the vowels are listed once more). An innovation is that teachers receive didactic comments for the implementation for the first part of the reading training (in a smaller font). The author's note suggesting not to split up multiple graphs such as <sch> or <ch> to single letters, but to treat them as a unit and pronounce them as [ʃə] or [xə], confirms that this book works with the alphabet method and not yet with phonics (if it were phonics, the sounds [ʃ] and [x] would be given).

Image 4 – «Neues ABC und Lesebuch für die Schweizerjugend von 5 bis 8 Jahren» 1797, title page, pp. 3 and 4 (University Library Basel)

The reading training continues with the practise of mono-, bi-, and multisyllabic words, including a number of first names (as in the *Namenbüchlein*). Two moralizing stories follow the mediation of punctuation marks and rules on how to form syllables. At the end of the reading training, repetition with short sen-

□ **Bernese Primers (continued)**

tences takes place. Here, the author also gives instructions to teachers; sometimes, he even provides whole sentences that need to be spoken to pupils. Contrary to previous primers, reading comprehension starts much earlier. Teachers receive the task of forming questions in order to examine whether pupils understood the text.

A short grammatical input on nouns and verbs builds the transition between reading training and reading part. The latter starts off with exercises of "reading and thinking", that is a series of proverbs and riddles. The following longish reading texts contain moralizing narratives, mostly with children as protagonists, which are interrupted by aphorisms. Religious texts are with more than 30 pages still a significant part of this primer. However, these texts are complemented with short stories about Christian virtues (patience, altruism, sincerity) and negative virtues (impatience, theft), instructions for children on how to correctly live (diligence, no animal abuse), sample letters, a long text about natural history, religious proverbs and sentences, and ethics for older pupils. As a new feature, 15 pages are dedicated to federal state laws. Numbers and measurements complete the primer. Heinzmann goes far beyond catechism primers: he wants children to develop basal reading skills for reading comprehension. Instead of a religious upbringing of children, he wants them to become reasonable, virtuous and law-abiding human beings (1797, 2).

2.2 «*Erster Lese-Unterricht für die Jugend.*» 1804, by Franz Wagner

This 38 page-long primer makes a link to the previously published primer by Heinzmann and combines the reading training and practice section in approximately the same way. The first part introduces the alphabet in different fonts (Fraktur, Antiqua script, Kurrent); letter combinations, mono- and multisyllabic words and sentences are studied. The first part finishes with digits and punctuation marks. Another feature adopted from Heinzmann are the didactic comments. In this primer they appear either in footnotes or as comments within the text. One of these comments sheds light on how the transition from letter names to sounds is realised - by combinations of vowels + consonants read according to the "A-B-Ab" method. The teacher starts off with pronouncing the single names of the letters, and in a following step, he synthesises the sounds. Wagner defends this traditional method as the most beneficial for automation (1804, 5-6).

The reading part contains (in Fraktur and Antiqua script): two texts about realia (the earth and human beings), and seven moralizing narratives, which are each introduced via a woodcut (e.g. *Edles Mitleiden* [noble compassion]). There is a total lack of religious primary texts such as prayers or the Creed (with this decision he takes a further step in the direction of a new type of primer than Heinzmann). For the purpose of the Enlightenment period, the moralizing stories are about religious tolerance towards people of a different creed, about the commonwealth as public responsibility, and about reason as decision-maker. – For the first time in the collection of Bernese primers, an author directly addresses children in a short introduction of the moralizing narratives:

> […] *zu dem Ende theile ich Euch hier, liebe Kinder, zum Beschluß meines kleinen Buches einige Erzählungen und Fabeln mit, von denen ich hoffe, daß sie vortheilhaft auf Euch wirken sollen.* (1804, 25)

> [Dear children, at the end of this part, I present you with some stories and tales of which I hope that they might have a beneficial impact on you.]

Excursion: «*Anweisung zum Buchstabieren- und Lesenlehren.*» 1801, by Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi

Pestalozzi levelled criticism against the methods of previously released primers, since he disliked the too hasty transition from simple syllables to difficult words and complex compositions (1801, III). In 1801, Pestalozzi published a manual

Bernese Primers (continued)

for both teachers and mothers, who carried a crucial role in the education of children. The manual offers a 14 page-long introduction into Pestalozzi's methods and provides didactic hints for the teaching of reading. The second part spreads over 49 pages; it contains tables with syllables and words that children are supposed to read.

This method uses sounds as a starting point, not letters. Before children encounter letters, they have to be familiarized with the reception and production of sounds (1801, VI). First of all, they are supposed to learn vowels, followed by combinations of vowels + consonants. These combinations are not articulated separately but are synthesised (and therefore read as sounds). In the second part of the tables presented, both syllables and words in Fraktur were read systematically. It is not before children were able to master the tables that they received their personal reading book. Already before this manual Pestalozzi had repeatedly pointed out the importance of object-lessons for the acquisition of written language (see 1877).

Osterwalder and Reusser (1997, 341) suppose that this manual was popular and widely distributed a short period of time only, afterwards, however, the manuals disappeared. Apart from the primers from abroad, which already worked with phonics, Pestalozzi certainly promoted their introduction to Switzerland.

2.3 «Erstes Lese- und Sprachbuch, oder Uebungen, um richtig sprechen, lesen und schreiben zu lernen» 1831

According to the preface, this 99 page-long band matches the eponymous primer written by Wilhelm Harnisch, which appeared in Breslau in 1813. Only trifles were changed according to local conditions (1831, 2). The preface already points to the fact that this primer introduces, contrary to the previous Bernese ones, a new important feature, that is the read-and-write method, i.e. the combined teaching of both competences (1831, 2). A second new feature builds on Pestalozzi's critique (as outlined in the digression) on the primers of the 18th century. Here, the transition from simple syllables to difficult words is much smoother and illustrated in a more comprehensible way. Letters are no longer introduced *en bloc* within the whole alphabet during the reading training, but rather introduced gradually and combined and synthesised with other letters. Vowels are put at the beginning of this primer, followed by single consonants (nasals, vibrant, laterals, plosives, and fricatives), which are directly combined with the vowels and therefore read with their sounds rather than with the letter name. After the reading of syllables, mono- and multisyllabic words, and sentences (in Fraktur), this part is completed by some spelling exercises (about lengthening and sharpening).

The second part contains both a series of short stories about girls and boys describing their everyday life, and moralizing texts. In the last third, Antiqua script is introduced. Further texts (prose and lyrics) are presented. Four pages of prayers and biblical proverbs interrupt these texts.

A list of the complete alphabet in both upper and lower case, written in Fraktur and in Antiqua script, cannot be found until the appendix. The book closes with digits, time indications, shortenings, measurements and weights, and an overview of contents.

2.4 «Namen-Büchlein zum ersten Unterricht im Lesen und Schreiben» 1838, by Rickli

The next Bernese primer, also working with the read-and-write method, contains 83 pages and is arranged in three parts: part 1 reading of sounds (not letters) – part 2 reading of root syllables and words – part 3 grammar (reading of inflected and complex words). The primer is designed for pupils, only the preface and the titles (marked by another font) are for teachers only. In the preface, Rickli briefly explains the method while pointing towards the read-

Bernese Primers (continued)

and-write class by Raimund Jakob Wurst (1838, III). Since phonemes and graphemes do not have a one-to-one correspondence in German, and the sounds depend on the syllabic surrounding, pupils had to receive a vast array of exercises to know numerous words and their respective spelling. For that reason, the primer works with word stems and their derivations (1838, I-II). Wagner considers engagement with grammar imperative for the foundation of orthography.

In the first part of the band, vowels and vowel-consonant-combinations are taught. The consonants are neither introduced alphabetically nor according to the place and manner of articulation, but by the typeface: Firstly, consonants without ascenders or descenders (such as <n>, <m>) are introduced. Secondly, consonants with ascenders follow (like <l>, <b>), thirdly, consonants with descenders (e.g. <g>, <p>), and finally consonants with both ascenders and descenders (such as <f>) follow. In the end, umlaut + consonants as well as diphthongs + consonants are introduced.

The second part of the band engages with the reading of word stems of different word classes gaining in length (mono- and bi-syllabics). Quite early a reference to orthography is made. The introduction of majuscules is connected with the hint of the capitalized spelling of "things" whereas in a next step, lengthening and sharpening are trained. It is not until almost the end of this part that the complete alphabet appears. A classification of sounds in vowel, umlaut and diphthong, and consonants in bilabial, lingual, palatal, and high sounds build the end of this part. As far as reading is concerned, pupils stop at the word reading level, a reading text part is missing.

The third part consists of grammar, i.e. the morphology (inflection and derivation). The appendix offers further grammatical inputs, e.g. for composition, word families, vowel gradation, and irregular verbs.

2.5 «*Erstes Lesebuch, oder, Gründliche Anleitung zum Lesen (gestützt auf die Lautirmethode und auf vieljährige Erfahrungen im Gebiete dieses Unterrichtsgegenstandes)*» 1838 (2 volumes), by G. Ramsler

In 1838, another two-volume primer utilises the read-and-write method. Unfortunately, only the second edition from 1852 of the first volume with reading training titled *Lautier- und Leseübungen* [sound- and reading exercises] remains. According to the preface (1852, n.p.) the original method was kept, only the scope was extended due to the takeover of texts from volume two plus an addition of a manual for writing classes (24 pages)[7]. The second volume of 140 pages reading texts, including an introduction to grammar, remains in the first edition of 1838 only, it is said to have been significantly shorter in edition two.

As with the previous primers, the reading training initially introduced vowels in combination with consonants (phonics). Noticeably early, Ramsler tried to combine phonological recoding with reading comprehension. Therefore, these letter combinations form first words such as <mai> [May] and <mama> (p. 2). Words gain in length, and before all letters are introduced, first sentences can be read. Already, after the introduction of majuscules, questions about orthography arise, such as lengthening and sharpening. The alphabet in both Fraktur and Antiqua script is introduced at the end of part one of this booklet. Regarding the exercises in Antiqua font, letters are introduced step by step; finally sentences and texts can be read in Antiqua script and Fraktur. Proverbs, poems, prayers, and small moralizing narratives are listed in the appendix.

The reading part offers an introduction to grammar – containing the inflection of word classes, word formation, passive formation, and vocabulary exercises – and further reading exercises. Competences are gradually established from simple to difficult. These are always linked in texts. The second half consists of moralizing narratives with children as protagonists – first in Fraktur, then in Antiqua script. The last five pages include proverbs, poems, songs, and prayers.

□ **Bernese Primers (continued)**

2.6 «Erstes Lesebuch des Kindes zum Gebrauch beim Lautirunterrichte, bestehend aus den bekannten Strassburgertabellen in Buchformat» 1844

This 144 page-long teaching material contains a short part of reading training for the acquisition of reading techniques (using the phonics method), and a longer reading unit. First, the sounds of twelve consonants are learnt, followed by the introduction of vowels. Since [ʃ] for the multiple graph of <sch> is introduced at an early stage, it becomes obvious that spoken language is in the centre of attention. After a brief introduction of single sounds, systematic combinations of vowels + consonants follow. It is not before then that the sounds of the remaining consonants emerge. After only a few pages, first words are read and majuscules are introduced; the next page covers lengthening and sharpening. At the end of part one, first short sentences can be found and consonant clusters in initial word position are exercised.

The reading part covers 65 texts with increasing level of difficulty. Included are proverbs and moralizing narratives from children's environment, where the child is always addressed directly. At the end of this part, the alphabet is introduced in upper- and lowercase letters, in Fraktur and Antiqua script, and a restricted number of texts are provided in both fonts. The last pages are dedicated to concluding prayers and proverbs, which stretch along seven pages. Finally, a 12 page-long appendix containing folksongs closes this book.

3 Bernese Object Primers: Reading and Object-Lessons

The main feature of the new type of primer is the connection of language and object-lessons. The point is that children have to be familiarised with real objects from their environment in order to develop both intellectually and linguistically – not that children gain access to religion or that moralizing narratives serve as examples or act as deterrent (e.g. Bartnitzsky 2016, 10). Only after a close multi-sensorial perception of the object follows a linguistic view, e.g. through description and narratives (ibid.). At the beginning of the 19th century, Pestalozzi already considered multi-sensorial perception as fundamental to cognisance (1877, 145). A text written by Morf in 1857 illustrates the significance of object-lessons in the middle of the 19th century. According to Morf (1857, 24), children starting school hold unclear and incomplete worldviews, thus, objects of everyday life (realia) serve as perception aids for the indoctrination of mind (ibid., 25).

One can observe how primers of this type explicitly include *Anschauungsübungen* [object-lesson exercises], and how, in the middle of the 19th century, language books turn into a combination of language- and realia books, dealing with objects first, then with people, and finally with morality and religion (Gabele 2002, 29). However, the combination of language and realia only lasts until the beginning of the 20th century, when pure language books are reintroduced. Methodically, the read-and-write method [German: *Schreiblesemethode*] is established. In the middle of the 19th century, the first primers of this type continue using the phonics method. The 1880s and 1900s primers move away from a synthetic procedure towards an analytic-synthetic procedure and from abstract towards concrete operation units. The so-called *Normalwörtermethode* [keyword method], being a variant of the whole word method, uses a limited number of particularly suitable, child-friendly words. The children learn to segment them into letter sounds in order to synthesise them into new words.

3.1 «Erstes Lesebüchlein für die untern Klassen der bernischen Schulen» 1845

This teaching material is clearly reminiscent of the Enlightenment primer described in section 2, since the book is split in a primer- and a reading part; moralizing narratives can be found, too. However, it is the first Bernese primer to explicitly introduce an additional part with object-lesson exercises.

Bernese Primers (continued)

The first half of the 95 pages consists of reading training, where the phonics method, typical for the Enlightenment primers, is still in use. The only change brought about is that vowels are introduced in two steps (first: i, u, e, then: o, a) and directly combined with consonants. From the starting point of these combinations, reading of successively growing units as well as short texts follows.

The second half of the primer deviates from previous primers, since an object-lesson part was added between the reading training part and the reading text part. Sentences that are meant to represent children's environment are supposed to enhance children's competencies in reading, speaking, and writing. These sentences appear under the title of *Anschauungsübungen* [object-lesson exercises]. The first chapter focuses on everyday objects from children's environments, from there the scope widens continually (e.g. everyday objects in classrooms, in the living room, the garden, village, country). Chapter two lists and inflects adjectives for the description of features. The third chapter describes the activities of the child, teacher, etc. and is followed by numerous occupations. All sentences are immediately used for an implicit grammar lesson (inflection of verbs according to person, time, and mode).

The last quarter of the primer consists of the traditional reading part, where narratives in the form of moralizing stories, descriptions of everyday objects, animals, etc. follow. Aphorisms, poems, and five pages of prayers are available for memorization.

3.2 «Lesebuch für die erste Stufe der Primarschule des Kantons Bern» 1864. «1. Theil: Der Lese-Schreib-Unterricht», «2. Theil: Die Anschauungs-, Denk- und Sprachübungen»

The reading book consists of 30 pages of reading training, and of a 160 page-long part about object-lesson, thinking, and language exercises, which are customized for pupils from first to third grade. Both parts should be used parallel to each other (1864, n.p.). The following paragraphs only describe the part for the first and second grade. The department of education in Bern declared both bands as mandatory teaching material.

What is new about the reading training part is that the letters are introduced in Kurrent, the previously used font Fraktur follows in the middle of this part. Taking the *Schreibschrift* [cursive handwriting] as a starting point indicates the significance of writing in this primer. The introduction of letters via their sounds commences with the vowels <i> and <e> in combination with the nasals <n> and <m>. Further vowels are introduced, followed by consonants, which are then combined to syllables and eventually to words. The second half of this part introduces majuscules written in both Kurrent and Fraktur, and reading is exercised with the help of sentences. This part closes with a morning- and evening prayer.

The second band (in Fraktur) is subdivided in a descriptive and a narrating part, which are supposed to stir the mind: respectively, phantasy and temper. Object-lessons build the basis: children shall eye and touch things (objects, people, etc.), they are supposed to talk about things before reading and writing about them.

The descriptive part focuses on naming and creating simple sentences about the perceived objects. Children have to talk and write about what they look like, what their functions are -they learn about school, their house, and environment. The narrative part contains prose and lyrical texts with moralizing content; this part thematically builds on the perceptive part. A page full of prayers follows at the end.

Bernese Primers (continued)

3.3 «Fibel. Erstes Sprachbüchlein für schweizerische Elementarschulen» 1876 (available in an unchanged edition from 1881), by H. R. Rüegg

In 1876, this reading teaching material arose as an order from the Swiss cantonal authorities of education, it was the first to carry the title *Fibel* [primer] in Bern. Hans Rudolf Rüegg, a scholar of Thomas Scherr, was supposed to create a German teaching book for first to third graders that could be used throughout the German speaking area of Switzerland. This German teaching book was created on the basis of Scherr's publications in Zurich. In 1876, the band for first grade appeared for the first time, in 1881 an unaltered edition was published, and in the years of 1880 and 1890 numerous further editions followed (sometimes in different fonts). In Bern, it was not declared as mandatory.

This primer strikes a new path, since this version of the read-and-write method does not start with single letters respectively single sounds towards "pointless syllables" (1881, 3), but rather with *Normalwörter* [keywords]. These keywords are put at the beginning, they are analysed, and the resulting sounds are synthesised again. Rüegg (1881, 4) suggests preliminary exercises where both hearing and speech organs (training of phonological awareness) as well as eyes and hands (recognition of forms and graphomotor exercises) are trained.

The first half of the 44 page-long primer is written in Kurrent script, the second half in Fraktur. Aided by black and white illustrations, simple and meaningful keywords are introduced in 21 paragraphs. Their referees were seen as objects and the words were split up in their phonetic components, translated to letters and finally composed to new words. After 16 keywords (e.g. *ei*, *seil* [egg, rope] etc.), different reading exercises follow, before another seven keywords for lengthening and sharpening (e.g. *beeren*, *lamm* [berries, lamb]) are learnt and practised. In a next step, lowercase letters are juxtaposed in opposition to majuscules. This part ends with six pages of object-lesson exercises. In the second half, the letters in Kurrent are contrasted with Fraktur and first words are already read. The last ten pages are dedicated to a reading part consisting of simple texts. The texts are about realistic scenes from children's environment (e.g. at home, in school), in the form of rhymes, poems, riddles, but also includes realia. In the ending, there are four short poems as well as a list of the alphabet in Fraktur.

Image 5 – «Fibel. Erstes Sprachbüchlein für schweizerische Elementarschulen» 1881, front page, p. 5 (Swiss National Library)

4 The Bernese primers from 1680 to 1876

As in other language regions, the Bernese primers can be allocated to different types of primer. However, these different types cannot be seen as isolated, homogenous groups. The Bernese catechism and Enlightenment primers show numerous transitions (see subsections 1.3, 1.4, 2.1, and 2.2). The catechism

□ Bernese Primers (continued)

primers only teach reading with the alphabet method, whereas the Enlightenment primers work with different methods of written language acquisition. Until the beginning of the 19th century, only reading is taught with the alphabet method (writing follows significantly later). As of 1830, both areas of competencies are introduced together in primers, one teaching with the phonics method. The group of object primers is not homogenous either. During the 1840s and the 1860s, the synthetic method was still in use, and the approach of realia within reading texts gained presence. As of 1870, a new analytical-synthetic method of reading instruction appears. See figure 1 for an overview of types of primers and their reading instruction methods.
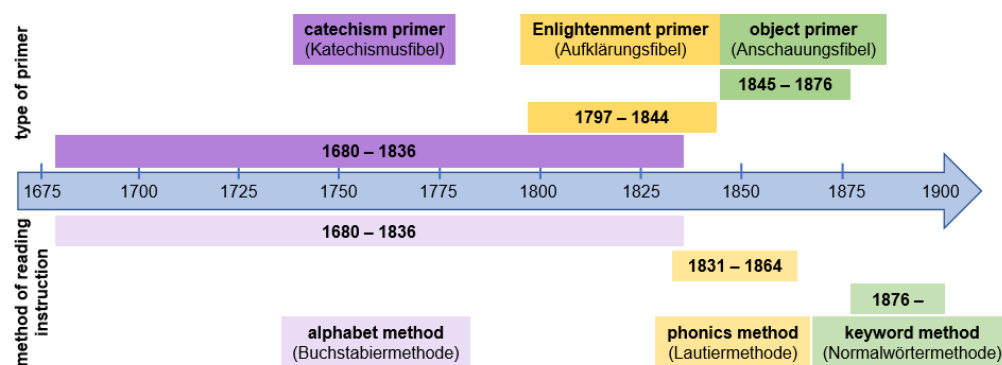

Figure 1: Bernese reading primers: different types of primer and methods of reading instruction and their chronological use[8]

Notes

1. Only four years later, another reading primer was published: "*Namen-Büchlein: Sampt dem Vatter Unser/ Glauben/ Zehen Gebotten/ auch andern schönen Gebätten/ mit underschiedenlichen Sylben/ der Jugend vast nutzlich und fürderlich zu lehrnen*». [Reading Primer: Including the Lord's Prayer / the Creed / the Ten Commandments / other Lovely Prayers / with Different Syllables / Useful and Beneficial for Youth's Learning Process]. Bern: Hoch-Obrigkeitliche Druckerey. Unfortunately, only an incomplete transcript remains (University Library Bern).
2. In 1799, a survey of teachers (called "Stapfer-Enquête") points to an animated use of the *Namenbüchlein*. It was among the ten most used teaching materials and was applied in almost every second school in the canton of Bern (see Pfaeffli-Ruggli 2007, 39).
3. What is new about this primer is that basics of grammatical knowledge of morphology (stem, derivation) are introduced, which, as we know today, support reading (e.g. Sénéchal & Kearnan 2007).
4. Due to the illustrations, Skjelbred et al. (2017, 44) classify similar Norwegian reading primers as a special type of primer, the *Bilde-abc-er*.
5. Online accessible via: http://www.verfassungen.de/ch/bern/verf31-i.htm
6. «*Gesetz über die öffentlichen Primarschulen des Kantons Bern*» [Laws about public schools from the canton of Bern], from 13.3.1835.
7. This manual consists almost exclusively of writing exercises (in Kurrent).
8. The keyword method is continued in the «*Fibel in Schreibschrift*» (1901).

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Bernese Primers (continued)

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Latgalian Primers

Latgalian Primers (1768-2018), Part 1

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Lethos, qui proprie dicuntur Lethigalli*

2018 marks the 250th anniversary of the first Latgalian primer having been published in 1768. Its title is in the Polish language *Elementarz łotewski z abecadłem, krótkim katechizmem* [Latvian Primer with the Alphabet, with a Short Catechism] since Latgale at that time was part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

The first part of this article on the history of Latgalian primers deals with basic information about the Latgalian language, followed by sections on Latgalian catechism primers and on primers compiled in the 20th century by Latgalian authors in Latvia. The second part – to be published in issue 16 of RPI – will consider Latvian primers adapted for use in schools in Latgale, primers for the Russification or Lettonisation of Latgalians, Latgalian primers published in Soviet Russia and, finally, Latgalian primers published in independent Latvia since 1992.

Latgalians have been called Latvians throughout the centuries. It suggests that the word *Latvian* was synonymous with the word *Latgalian* (this makes sense if we consider that the compound *Lat-gale/Lat-gola* means *the place* or *the land of Latvians* (Karulis 1992, 504-505). In the Latgalian language that part of Latvia without Latgale is called *Čyuleja* and its autochthonous inhabitants – *čyuli* since Latgalians call themselves very often *latvīši* (Latvians). Latgalians have been called from the times immemorial *latgaļi*, *lotygaļi*, *letigali* or *latvīši*, *latvi*, *lati*, *letti*, *lotva*, *latiši*, *lotyši.*

The Latgalian language has been and still is called variously – *High Latvian language* (G. Manteuffel), *Latvian language* (J. Kurmins, O. Skrinda, P. Strods, F. Trasuns), *Latgal language* (A. Bērzkalns, M. Bukšs[1], J. Placinskis), *Latgal written language* (M. Bukšs), *Latgalian language* (V. Daškevica, L. Leikuma), *Latgalian literary language* (A. Breidaks), *Latgalian written language* (A. Ozols, K. Karulis, A. Augstkalns, A. Stafecka), *Latgalian literary written language* (A. Ozols), *Latgalian literary (written) language* (A. Breidaks, L. Leikuma, A. Stafecka), *High Latvian dialect* (M. Rudzīte), *written language of the dialect of*

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* "Letts that in reality are called Latgals"; see: Henricus de Lettis, *Heinrici Cronicon Lyvoniae* [The Livonian Chronicle of Henry], Riga, 1224 – 1227, X. 3.