

Radio Franglais

(one plot two languages series)

Middlesex University Press, 2007

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The text of *Radio Franglais* aims to provide an authentic bilingual experience by telling a story in eight chapters in French which sequentially alternate with seven chapters in English. The narrative is not arranged in conventionally bilingual ways where one page is in one language and the symmetrically opposite page is in the corresponding other language as is the case with most books of such a kind.

Instead, the narrative scaffold of *Radio Franglais* is such that the only way for the reader to follow the story thread is by wading through both languages, a rather neat way for a language teacher to surreptitiously educate the reader in the target language by stealth.

Effectively forcing the reader to pursue the plot by alternatively engaging in both languages is a clever strategy to develop incipient or more capable bilingualism in the reader. The author provides a storyline that attracts young readers because of the competitive or quest nature of the plot.

The insouciance of the story is extended by a boy-girl tension as well as competing views of what teen metropolitan lives in the 21st century are and aren't about. Altogether, this is a text that does presume some rudimentary linguistic ability in French by the reader, and therefore is probably more for a reader who has a mastery of basic vocabulary and grammatical essentials, not for a beginner. The volume is to be commended for its ambitious scope, and is sure to satisfy any young reader with bilingual leanings.

Boulicault has given this slim book of less than 100 pages considerable thought and attention. For one, she has maintained a demanding standard in the target language, ably supported by a helpful glossary and even a quiz. This deliberate tactic does not aim to dumb down French for the sake of the reader's youth and presumed linguistic lack. Indeed, it is loaded in authentic French, replete with idiosyncratic richness and French peculiarities of language that enable the story to be enriched and have added intrigue.

Becoming a global citizen in a borderless and information rich context is a challenge that can be met by new and emerging Information and Communication Technologies, and also by innovative publishing ideas such as this Middlesex University Press series.

Postscript: in Australia, there is only one bilingual public school with a harmonized curriculum (equally delivered in French and English), and it is Telopea Park in Canberra which has French Government staff as well as Australian teachers and which qualifies its 7 to 10 students to continue their studies in France or in Australia. This school has purchased a class set of *Radio Franglais* because of its obvious fit. But there is no reason why Alliance Française or any other Australian student intent on a more than basic French linguistic competence should not also have a copy.