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# Usefulness of various online tools for determining the CEFR level of English reading texts

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# Overview

Reading comprehension and the role of text complexity

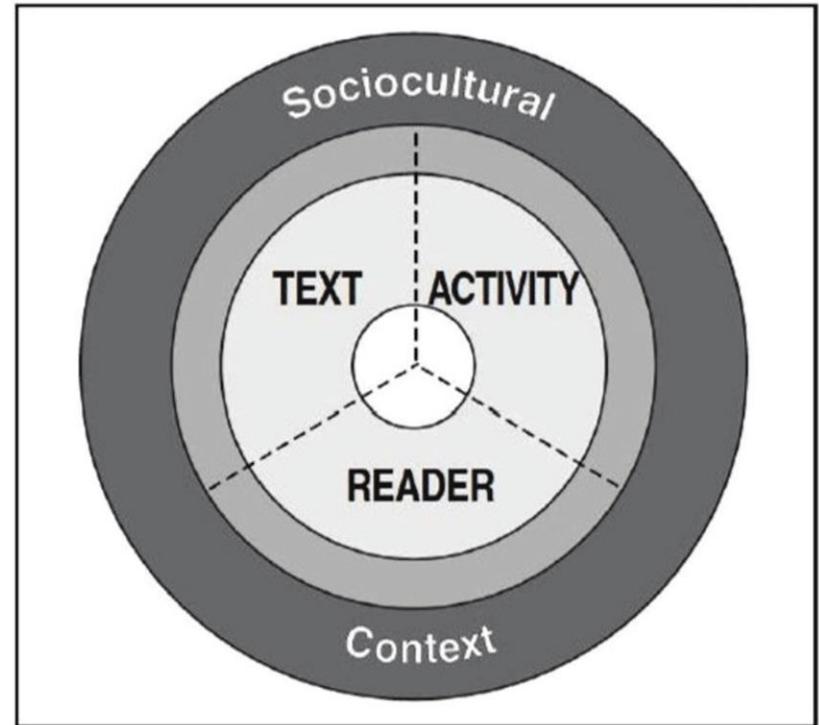
Text complexity measures

CEFR levels and text complexity

Online tools for text levelling and their usefulness

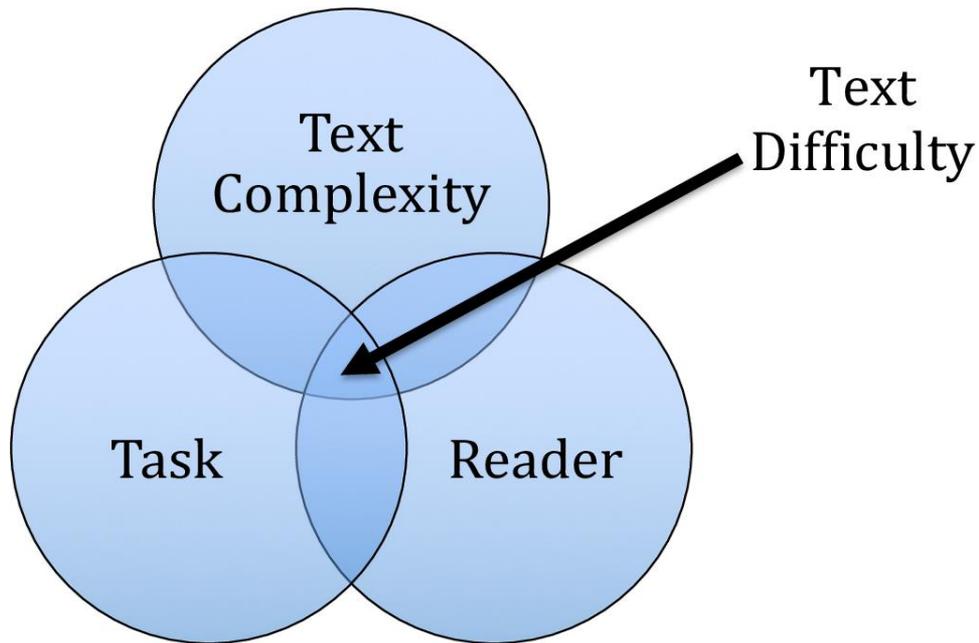
# Reading comprehension

- = the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language.
- consists of three elements: the reader, the text, and the activity or purpose for reading.



RAND model of reading comprehension (Snow 2002)

# Text complexity vs text difficulty



Cunningham and Mesmer (2014: 256)

**Text complexity** = features inherent to a passage or book that can be analysed, manipulated, or otherwise studied

**Text difficulty** = a characterisation of the overall challenge of a text for readers

**Text complexity** lies within the text; **text difficulty** is a function of the relationship between reader ability and text complexity.

# Text complexity measures



## **Qualitative dimensions** of text complexity

- Those aspects of text complexity best measured or only measurable by an attentive human reader, such as levels of meaning or purpose; structure; language conventionality and clarity; and knowledge demands.

## **Quantitative dimensions** of text complexity

- Those aspects of text complexity, such as word length or frequency, sentence length, and text cohesion, that are typically measured by computer software

# Readability

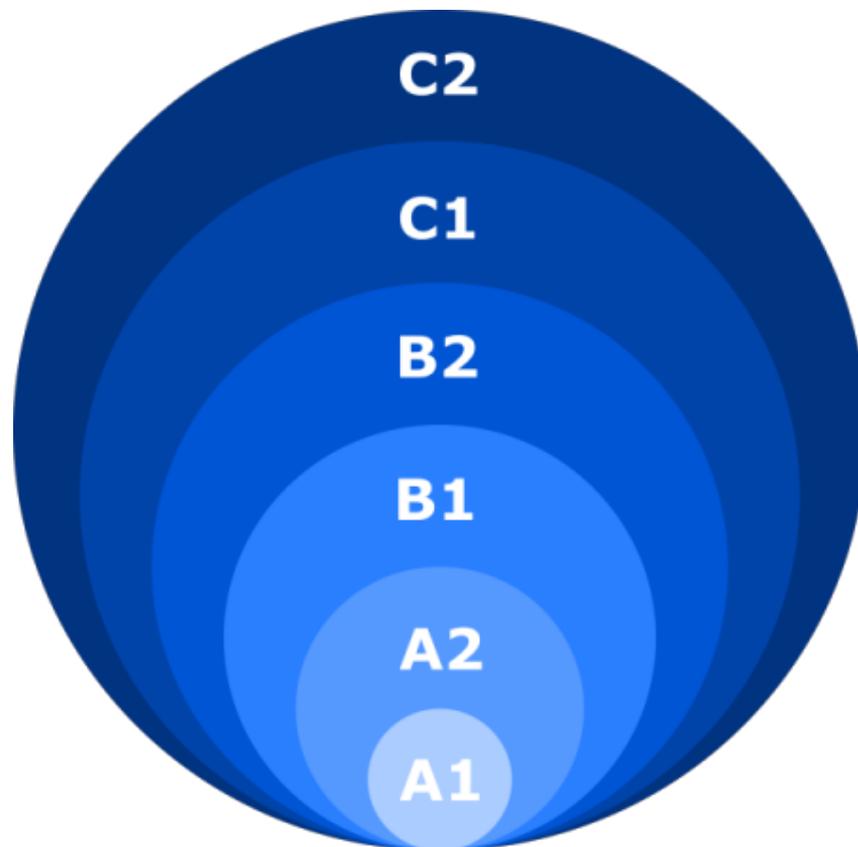
- = **refers to how easy it is to read and understand a text**, depending on its unique features.
- measured by **collecting key metrics** relating to the text then **using a specific mathematical formula or collection of formulas** to calculate.
- **Flesch Reading Ease** and the **Flesch Kincaid Grade Level** – the most popular and are the most widely tested and used; based on two factors:
  - **Sentence length** = the average number of words in a sentence
  - **Word length** = the average number of syllables in a word

# CEFR levels

Level descriptors were created without reference to any specific language, which guarantees their relevance and across-the-board applicability.

The descriptors specify progressive mastery of each skill.

However, for textbook authors, teachers and other professionals, the specification set out in the CEFR may appear excessively broad.



# Overall reading comprehension

Can understand **very short, simple texts** a single phrase at a time, picking up familiar names, words and basic phrases and rereading as required.

Can understand **short, simple texts** containing the **highest frequency vocabulary**, including a proportion of shared international vocabulary items.

Can read **straightforward factual** texts on subjects related to their field of interest with a **satisfactory** level of comprehension.

Can understand **in detail lengthy, complex texts**, whether or not these relate to their own area of speciality, provided they can reread difficult sections.

Can understand virtually all types of texts including **abstract, structurally complex, or highly colloquial literary and non-literary writings**.

Can read with a large degree of independence, adapting style and speed of reading to **different texts and purposes**, and using appropriate reference sources selectively.

# Linguapress EFL / ESL

Flesch Reading Ease	CEFR level	Khalifa & Weir (2009)
<b>0-50</b> Very difficult (Higher education)	<b>C2</b>	57.7
<b>50 - 60</b> Fairly difficult (11th or 12th grade)	<b>C1</b>	58.4
<b>60 - 70</b> Plain English - easy to understand by students from 14 to 15 years upwards	<b>B2</b>	66.5
<b>70 - 80</b> Fairly easy - accessible to students aged 13 upwards	<b>B1</b>	64.7
<b>80 - 90</b> Easy	<b>A2</b>	78.3
<b>90 - 100</b> Very easy	<b>A1</b>	

# Tools tested

**Text Inspector** – the web-based language analysis tool created by Stephen Bax

- a ‘professional’ web tool for analysing texts
- readability, complexity, lexical diversity, estimated CEFR level and other key statistics

**CEFR Checker** – a smart analyser developed by Cathoven AI

- each CEFR level split into 10 levels
- a general level of the text and its three different aspects: vocabulary, verb forms and sentence structure

**Text Analyzer** from Road to Grammar

- estimates CEFR level based on word and sentence length and word complexity (= the position of the word in the list of 10,000 most frequent words in English)

# Texts analysed

## Year 12 reading paper 2021

CEFR level	Bi-level reading comprehension and vocabulary and grammar test: B1 and B2
Length	6 'texts' with 7 tasks, 60 items
Task 2	one text, 533 words, 8 items, MC, mean: 66%
Task 3	four texts, 549 words, 10 items; MM, mean: 81%
Task 5	one text, 707 words, 8 items, MM, mean: 68%

# Results

Text	Flesch	Lingua- press	Text Inspector	CEFR Checker	Text Analyzer
T2	51.55	C1	B2+	B2.2	C2
<b>T3</b>	<b>62.50</b>	<b>B2</b>	<b>B2</b>	<b>B2.6</b>	<b>B2</b>
T5	50.39	C1	B2+	Native	C1

# References

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<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/>.

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# Thank you.



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