Readability of Reading Texts for EFL Students at Al-Baha University

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Abstract

Reading is an important skill for EFL university students, as it reinforces their critical and analytical thinking. EFL university students rely on reading texts to expand their knowledge of the outside world and enhance their memory functions, enabling them to use the target language more effectively. EFL instructors depend on the reading texts as the basis for curricular and extracurricular activities to enhance their learners' language skills, enabling them to use the language in everyday situations. Therefore, selecting suitable English textbooks with appropriate reading texts is crucial for students' achievement and progress. Research in the areas of readability of textbooks and reading texts is very important to assess the appropriateness of different texts for learners. Many readability studies have focused on examining the suitability of readability formulas for measuring the readability level of texts provided to learners. This study measured the readability level of the reading texts of Evolve 4 special edition (published by Cambridge University Press) offered to EFL university students using online digital software that utilizes a set of the most commonly used readability formulas, including the Flesch Reading Ease Formula, Gunning Fog index, and Coleman Liau index. This study also used a set of cloze tests administered to female EFL university students, designed by the researcher to measure the readability level of the reading texts and provide suggestions and recommendations for EFL instructors who teach the textbook at the university level. The findings of this study show that the readability level of the reading texts in the English book Evolve 4 special edition is fairly challenging for EFL university students, as measured by a set of readability instruments. Consequently, the study recommends that EFL instructors should utilize a diverse set of teaching strategies and cooperative work methods to help their students read and understand the reading texts in Evolve 4 special edition. Moreover, EFL instructors should take into account significant factors that can affect the readability of English reading texts, such as learners' interest, prior background, style of the text, and the content itself. These considerations should guide instructors in tailoring their approach to maximize student learning outcomes.

Keywords: readability, reading texts, readability formulas, cloze test

1. Introduction

Language learning is a process through which learners acquire knowledge of a subject or skills through study, experience, and instruction (Istikhomah, Syafei, & Nuraeningsih, 2023). Reading is a fundamental language skill that EFL learners must master as it is the primary means of expanding their knowledge by comprehending the content of reading texts. Hizriani (2017) emphasized the importance of reading texts for EFL learners, highlighting their need to be capable of reading and comprehending a variety of texts to gain schematic, social, and cultural knowledge, and to develop reading strategies for extracting meaning, thereby forming a critical perspective of the content. Reading texts are indispensable for EFL university students who rely on them to broaden their knowledge and acquire new vocabulary for communicative purposes. Therefore, selecting suitable English textbooks with appropriate reading texts is crucial for students' achievement and language learning progress.

The readability of reading texts in language textbooks can be influenced by learners' proficiency level, interests, and motivation. Thus, selecting the right reading texts for EFL learners is essential to ensure that learners benefit from the assigned textbooks and enhance their language proficiency. A correlation should exist between learners' language proficiency level and the readability of reading texts, motivating learners to engage with the language interactively and master language skills effectively. Richards and Renandya (2002) stressed the significance of selecting appropriate reading texts to improve learners' writing and speaking skills, in addition to vocabulary, grammar, and idiom mastery.

Reading texts in language textbooks play a vital role in enhancing EFL university students' language skills. EFL instructors must ensure that their learners understand the content and reading exercises well. The readability level of reading texts may be perceived differently by learners with varying language proficiency levels. Istikhomah et al. (2023) mentioned that the selection of appropriate reading texts is essential because uninteresting, complex, or lengthy texts can hinder students from understanding and grasping the material, and it can affect their motivation in the reading section. Therefore, selecting suitable reading texts with the right level of difficulty is crucial since text readability significantly affects comprehension and language acquisition.

The Preparatory Year Deanship at Al-Baha University has assigned the Evolve Series special edition, published by Cambridge University Press, to first-grade university students to enhance their linguistic and communicative skills by mastering A2 and B2 CEFR levels. The Evolve Series special edition, volumes 1 to 4, serves as the primary English language textbooks for the three semesters of the Preparatory Year at Al-Baha University. Each book comprises 12 units, each of which includes various activities and tasks aimed at developing EFL students' English language skills and cultural awareness. EFL students at level 3 are encouraged to attain the B2 level. Therefore, Evolve 4 is used at the third English level to enhance EFL university students' English language skills for effective communication. The Evolve series special edition focuses on the most effective strategies for EFL learners to make progress in English. Many EFL students have complained that the reading texts in the English Book Evolve 4, used at level 3, are difficult to understand.

Thus, this study aims to assess the readability level of the reading texts in Evolve 4 special edition to determine its suitability for EFL students and provide recommendations for EFL instructors teaching Evolve 4 at the university level. In measuring the readability of the reading texts in Evolve 4, the researcher utilized an online readability software platform (http://www.online-utility.org/English/readability). This online software employs well-known readability formulas. The findings of this study revealed that the readability level of the reading texts, as assessed by readability formulas and cloze tests, presented a considerable challenge to the EFL university students who took part in this study. As Tabatabaei and Bagheri (2013) pointed out, teachers may find a correlation between students' low scores on reading comprehension tests and the readability level of textbooks. Previous studies have shown that an appropriate readability level of reading texts is crucial for effective language learning. Therefore, the researcher of this study found it necessary to measure the readability level of the reading texts in Evolve 4 special edition.

In brief, the importance of selecting suitable reading texts in language textbooks for EFL university students cannot be overstated. The readability of such texts plays a crucial role in students' comprehension, motivation, and language acquisition. As highlighted by Istikhomah, Syafei, and Nuraeningsih (2023), Hizriani (2017), Richards and Renandya (2002), and Tabatabaei and Bagheri (2013), ensuring that the reading materials are engaging, appropriately challenging, and aligned with the students' language proficiency levels is essential. Regarding the usage of the Evolve 4 special edition in Al-Baha University's Preparatory Year program, it underscores the importance of conducting a comprehensive evaluation of reading text readability to enhance the learning experience for EFL students. It is clear that there is significant room for improvement in this regard. Therefore, the findings of this study provide valuable insights for EFL instructors and curriculum developers, enabling them to make informed decisions about the choice and adaptation of reading materials, ultimately fostering more effective language learning and student success.

2. Literature Review

Research on assessing the ease or difficulty of comprehending text has been ongoing since the 1920s. Thorndike (1921) introduced a method to measure text readability in his book "Teacher's Word Book." Over time, the study of readability has developed into a significant field dedicated to evaluating the complexity and accessibility of different texts. Xia, Kochmar, and Briscoe (2016) stressed that evaluating the readability of reading materials is a critical practice that assists writers in producing texts suitable for their target audience. Researchers are keen on assessing the readability of various textbooks to determine their appropriateness for their intended readers. Consequently, multiple studies have been conducted to evaluate the readability of textbooks designed for learners at different levels. Sahakian (1982), for instance, employed cloze tests to gauge the readability of preparatory school textbooks and discovered that these materials were unsuitable for middle school learners. Bacon and Finneman (1990) revealed that the difficulty of reading materials affects students' language learning, as overly challenging texts can lead to frustration, while overly simple texts might not engage students effectively.

Definitions of what makes a text easy to understand vary among researchers and educators, depending on their specific objectives. Early on, Dale and Chall (1949) provided an early and comprehensive definition of readability: "The sum total (including all the interactions) of all those elements within a given piece of printed material that affect the success a group of readers have with it. The success is the extent to which they understand it, read it at an

optimal speed, and find it interesting." According to Richards, Platt, & Platt (1992), readability refers to ""how easily written materials can be read and understood. This depends on several factors, including the average length of sentences, the number of new words contained, and the grammatical complexity of the language used in a passage". Kondru (2006) emphasized the importance of readability formulas, which estimate the number of years of instruction required for learners to read and comprehend a text.

Moreover, studies by Miftahurrahmi, Fitrawati, and Syarif (2017) assessed the readability of the "Look Ahead" textbook by Erlangga intended for twelfth-grade students and found that the reading texts were unsuitable for students at this grade level. Lu (2002) delved into the impact of readability on the selection of reading materials and textbook design for college English courses, concluding that readability significantly influences course materials, tasks, and activities. Kasule (2011) highlighted the importance of recognizing readability issues in education for effective reading instruction. Ismail, Yousof, and Yunus (2016) determined that readability is determined by lexical elements such as word count, concreteness, grammar, and coherence devices.

Readability research employs various formulas to evaluate the complexity of texts. One of the most renowned formulas is the Flesch Reading Ease Readability Formula (1948), which assigns a score to each text, ranging from 0 to 100, with higher scores indicating easier comprehension. The formula is calculated as follows:

$$206.835 - (1.015 \times \text{ASL}) - (84.6 \times \text{ASW} \tag{1}$$

Zamanian and Heydari (2012) noted that ASL stands for Average Sentence Length, and ASW stands for Average Syllables Per Word.

In 1968, Fry introduced the Fry Readability Graph, a widely recognized and dependable tool for assessing the readability of written content. This method involves manually gauging the readability of a given text by following these steps: select a 100-word passage from the text, locate the average sentence length on the vertical axis of the Fry Graph, find the average word length on the horizontal axis, and determine the associated grade level within the relevant section of the graph. This process is repeated for a minimum of three points on the graph to calculate the average grade level and overall readability score. In 2012, Zamanian and Heyadri referenced Fry, who had a keen interest in readability formulas, and highlighted the issues he had raised concerning the validity of certain readability formulas. These issues encompassed aspects such as assessing comprehension through traditional multiple-choice questions, using cloze texts to measure comprehension, tracking oral reading errors, evaluating subvocalization, considering the eye-voice span, relying on controlled subjective judgment, and examining concurrent validity, which involves the correlation between different readability formulas.

In 1969, McLaughlin introduced the SMOG Readability Formula, which is a straightforward tool for assessing the reading level of written content. This formula calculates the SMOG reading grade level using the equation:

$$\text{US} = 3 + \sqrt{P} \text{ (3 plus the square root of P)} \tag{2}$$

Where US represents the reading grade level, and P is the number of words with three or more syllables. As per DuBay (2004), the SMOG readability formula can be manually applied through the following steps: select and count 10 consecutive sentences at the beginning, middle, and end of the text, then tally up all the words from these 30 sentences.

Cloze tests are widely used tools for assessing reading comprehension and determining the readability of texts. These tests require students to fill in gaps in a text by drawing upon their prior knowledge, vocabulary, and context clues. Interpreting cloze test scores involves aligning them with established readability formulas, ensuring the accuracy of the results. However, some researchers argue for the need to develop practical readability metrics that exhibit a strong correlation with cloze readability measures. These metrics should rely on easily calculable text characteristics to determine readability scores.

In a cloze readability test, approximately every fifth to tenth word in a text is replaced with a gap, challenging learners to fill in these gaps using their prior knowledge, vocabulary, and text-derived clues. To ensure accuracy, the correct answers or words should match the words originally used by the author or their equivalents. Additionally, the first and last sentences of the cloze passage remain intact, providing learners with context related to the subject matter. The interpretation of scores in the cloze readability test aligns with well-known readability formulas, such as the Flesch Reading Ease and Dale-Chall formulas. Consequently, readability researchers often combine these formulas and cloze tests to ensure precise and valid results.

In contrast, recent research conducted by Olney in 2022 suggests that cloze tests may not yield as accurate data as traditional readability formulas like the Flesch Reading Ease and Fry Readability Graph. This is primarily due to the influence of human factors on data collection. Consequently, as Olney (2022) suggests, readability researchers have explored the development of "practical readability metrics" that demonstrate a strong correlation with cloze

readability measures. These metrics also rely on easily calculable text characteristics to determine readability scores.

In summary, the literature review and research presented in this paper underscore the critical importance of measuring the readability of reading texts in EFL university textbooks, such as the Evolve 4 special edition. The ability of EFL students to comprehend and engage with reading materials directly impacts their language learning, critical thinking, and academic success. While previous studies have explored various readability formulas and cloze tests to assess the appropriateness of reading texts, this study specifically examines the readability of the Evolve 4 special edition using a combination of these methods. This research highlights a notable gap in the literature regarding the suitability of specific EFL textbooks for university-level students and calls for further research into effective teaching strategies to help EFL university students overcome challenges posed by difficult reading texts. Overall, this research underscores the significance of ongoing investigations into text readability in the context of language education to ensure the optimal development of EFL university students' language skills and academic success.

3. Methodology

This study is a descriptive quantitative research. The researcher adopted a descriptive analytical approach to gather, analyze, and interpret the quantitative data resulting from the application of research instruments.

3.1 Participants

This study is a descriptive quantitative research that employed a descriptive analytical approach to gather, analyze, and interpret the quantitative data resulting from the application of research instruments.

3.2 Instruments

Two primary instruments were utilized in this research. The first was an online readability software platform used to assess the readability of 10 reading texts from the English textbook Evolve 4 special edition, published by Cambridge University Press. The second instrument was a set of cloze tests designed to evaluate the comprehension and readability of the same reading texts previously assessed in the initial phase of the research.

3.3 Samples

The study used 10 reading texts from the English Book Evolve 4 special edition (published by Cambridge Press) for the sample. These texts were assigned to EFL students at Al-Baha University in Saudi Arabia. The same set of reading texts was employed for the cloze tests administered to 30 female EFL university students. The selection of reading texts ensured that the students had not studied them before the cloze test administration.

3.4 Procedures

Data collection occurred in two distinct phases. Initially, the researcher carefully selected ten reading texts from Evolve 4, retyped them, and uploaded them onto the online readability platform available at http://www.online-utility.org/English/readability. This online tool processed the texts, providing vital data and scores to assess the readability of the texts, gauging their level of difficulty and the grade level required for comprehension by EFL students. In the third semester of 2023, the second phase involved administering cloze tests to female EFL students using the same set of reading texts from the first phase. In these cloze tests, the introductory and concluding sentences in each passage remained intact, while 5-10 words were systematically omitted at regular intervals within the remaining sentences, serving as an evaluation of comprehension and readability.

The study consisted of two stages. In the first stage, the researcher uploaded the 10 reading texts from Evolve 4 to an online readability platform. This platform provided data and scores to assess the texts' readability and grade level for EFL students. In the second stage, cloze readability tests were created to evaluate the comprehension abilities of female EFL university students. These tests retained the first and last sentences of each passage while systematically omitting 5-10 words within the remaining sentences, with 'n' set at 5 for this study.

The cloze readability tests included 10 reading cloze texts derived from Evolve 4 special edition, the same texts processed by the online readability software. These passages were selected from different lessons within Evolve 4, covering a range of topics. To prepare for the main readability cloze tests, a pre-testing phase was employed to gauge the time needed for students to complete the cloze tests and to help them become familiar with the types of questions they might encounter during the actual tests.

Prior to administering the cloze tests, students were given clear instructions, guiding them on how to guess the missing words in each sentence. Once the tests were completed, the answer sheets were collected and evaluated

for each student. To assess the readability of each reading text, a percentage score was assigned, following the three-level text readability model as recommended by Kasule (2011) and based on DuBay's (2004) levels:

50-60% = independent (unassisted reading) level

35-50% = instructional (assisted reading) level, and

Below 35% = frustration level.

The researcher utilized the well-established Flesch Reading Ease formula to assess the readability of selected reading texts from Evolve 4 special edition. This formula played a crucial role in determining the materials' ease or difficulty. To support this analysis, an all-encompassing online software platform, accessible at http://www.online-utility.org/English/readability, was employed. This platform offered a range of readability formulas, including the Coleman Liau index, Flesch Kincaid Grade Level, ARI (Automated Readability Index), SMOG, and the Flesch Reading Ease Formula, all known for their reliability in assessing text complexity. The platform generated data, providing insights into text readability levels and various lexical features for evaluation.

Each of the ten texts selected from Evolve 4 special edition was individually processed through the online digital readability platform available at http://www.online-utility.org/English/readability. This approach ensured the automatic and precise calculation of the readability level for each text, reducing errors, especially in word, syllable, and sentence count. The online software platform not only assessed text readability but also provided suggestions for simplifying or modifying sentences to improve it. The researcher employed descriptive analysis to interpret the data and utilized appropriate statistical analysis techniques, along with Microsoft Excel, to process and organize the collected data.

The data obtained from the online digital platform were subsequently compared with the data derived from the cloze tests. Scores from the cloze tests were used to determine the mean score for each text, as well as the total mean score for all the texts, enabling the measurement of the readability level for all the reading texts selected from Evolve 4. Averages, percentages, and standard deviations were calculated, and the results were presented in tables. Data from the readability formulas were examined and interpreted using the same method to provide a clear understanding of the language and lexical features influencing the readability level of the ten texts selected from Evolve 4 special edition.

In summary, this methodology involved a comprehensive approach to assess the readability of reading texts in Evolve 4 special edition. It combined various quantitative data collection techniques, including the Flesch Reading Ease formula, cloze readability tests, and an online digital platform. The study selected a diverse set of 10 reading passages and incorporated a pre-testing phase to familiarize participants with the tests. Statistical analyses and the readability formulas provided valuable insights into text complexity. The results from cloze tests and readability formulas were examined and presented, offering a holistic understanding of text readability. This methodology ensures the research's credibility and contributes valuable insights to the field of language education.

4. Results and Findings

In this section, the study's findings related to the readability level of the ten texts selected from Evolve 4 special edition are presented. The assessment of these texts' readability was conducted using the Flesch Reading Ease formula, a set of readability formulas, and a series of cloze tests. The results offer insights into the ease or difficulty of the selected texts.

All ten reading texts from Evolve 4 special edition were analyzed using the online digital platform at platform http://www.online-utility.org/English/readability to measure their readability. The Flesch Reading Ease formula, widely recognized for its validity and reliability, was employed in this study to determine the level of ease or difficulty within the selected texts from Evolve 4. The resulting scores are presented in Table 1 for further interpretation.

Table 1. presents the interpretation of Flesch Reading Ease Scores

Reading Ease Score	Style Description
0 – 30	Very Difficult
30 – 50	Difficult
50 – 60	Fairly Difficult
60 – 70	Standard
70 – 80	Fairly Easy
80 – 90	Easy
90 – 100	Very Easy

*source: Wikipedia.com

Table 2. The Flesch Reading Ease scores and the corresponding levels of difficulty for the 10 texts selected from Evolve 4 (special edition)

Evolve 4 (special edition)	Topic	Flesh Reading Ease Score	Level of Difficulty
T1	Smartphone lifeline	55.90	Fairly Difficult
T2	It's # WORLD I	54.98	Fairly Difficult
T3	STOP and GO	56.62	Fairly Difficult
T4	THE STORY OF THE RAMP	43.08	Difficult
T5	URBAN REGENERATION	60.00	Standard
T6	TOP 10 ACCIDENTAL DISCOVERIES	53.71	Fairly Difficult
T7	INVENTIONS PODCAST	48.65	Difficult
T8	FACT FILE: Islamic banking	54.29	Fairly Difficult
T9	MANAGING WORKPLACE STRESS	57.69	Fairly Difficult
T10	MORE THAN JUST A JERSEY	54.12	Fairly Difficult
Mean		53.88	Fairly Difficult
SD		4.61	

The table presented above provides an overview of the scores attributed to each text, which were used as input for the Flesch Reading Ease formula. Each score is subsequently interpreted based on a scale that defines the level of difficulty. The collective mean score for all ten texts from Evolve 4 amounts to 53.88, indicating that they can be collectively categorized as "fairly difficult." In addition, a standard deviation was calculated, offering insights into the extent of variation among these ten texts in terms of their level of difficulty. The standard deviation of 4.61 implies that the variability in difficulty levels among these texts is relatively limited. This aligns with expectations, as all ten reading texts stem from the same textbook, suggesting a consistent level of difficulty. Out of the ten texts, seven (T1, T2, T3, T6, T8, T9, and T10) consistently fall into the 'Fairly Difficult' category. In contrast, T4 and T7 are rated as 'Difficult,' while T5 achieves a score of 60, indicating a standard level of difficulty. The overall mean score for all ten texts is 53.88, collectively categorizing them as 'fairly difficult' in terms of readability, as shown in the table above.

The table below compiles data from five readability formulas applied by the online digital platform. It systematically presents scores, means, and standard deviations for the ten selected texts from Evolve 4 (special edition) used as input data.

Table 3. The scores, means, and standard deviation of the 10 reading texts selected from Evolve 4 (special edition) for the five readability formulas employed in the study

Evolve 4 (special edition) Text #	Topic	Gunning Fog index	Coleman Liau index	Flesch Kincaid Grade level:	ARI (Automated Readability Index):	SMOG	Mean	DS
T1	Smartphone lifeline	10.03	10.94	9.25	9.15	11.66	10.21	0.75
T2	It's # WORLD I	8.91	9.83	7.91	6.30	9.71	8.53	1.067
T3	STOP and GO	10.35	10.41	10.03	10.20	11.16	10.43	0.37
T4	THE STORY OF THE RAMP	11.96	12.03	11.42	10.65	12.38	11.16	0.68
T5	URBAN REGENERATION	10.84	9.18	9.54	9.13	10.91	9.30	0.47
T6	TOP 10 ACCIDENTAL DISCOVERIES	11.80	9.92	10.12	9.26	11.83	10.59	0.81
T7	INVENTIONS PODCAST	12.80	10.49	10.59	9.32	12.13	10.66	1.10
T8	FACT FILE: Islamic banking	11.34	9.01	8.98	6.85	12.19	9.16	1.95
T9	MANAGING WORKPLACE STRESS	11.60	10.29	10.02	10.34	11.94	10.4	0.49
T10	MORE THAN JUST A JERSEY	11.72	12.22	9.58	10.31	11.42	10.66	0.94
Mean		10.5	13.55	9.55	8.8	11	9.7	0.75

The calculations for the readability formulas were conducted in two stages. In the first stage, a vertical analysis was performed to determine the total mean of all 10 texts selected for the study, aiming to establish the grade level necessary for learners to read and comprehend the texts without assistance. The standard deviation for all 10 reading texts was also calculated, yielding a value of 0.78. This indicates that there is no significant variation in the scores among the 10 reading texts concerning grade level or the number of years of education required. This method also involved the calculation of means and standard deviations for each text processed separately by all five formulas. For instance, the lowest mean score obtained for a text when processed by all five formulas was 8.53 for T2, while the highest mean score among the 10 texts processed by the five formulas was 11.16 for T5. The smallest standard deviation was 0.37 for T3, while the largest was 1.067 for T2. In summary, the total mean and standard deviation for all 10 reading texts suggest no significant variation in the grade level or years of education required for reading and understanding each text. In the second stage, a horizontal analysis was carried out to calculate the total mean for all 10 reading texts of Evolve 4 special edition, processed by each formula separately. For instance, the lowest mean value was 8.8 for ARI (Automated Readability Index), while the highest mean value was 11 for SMOG, when applied to all 10 reading texts collectively. The mean score obtained for all 10 reading texts processed by the Gunning Fog index was 10.5. The mean score for all 10 reading texts processed by the Flesch Kincaid Grade Level formula was 9.55. The mean score for all 10 reading texts processed by the ARI (Automated Readability Index) was 8.8, and for the SMOG index, it was 11. In summary, the results indicate that there is no significant variation among the scores obtained from the application of the five formulas to all 10 reading texts of Evolve 4. This lack of variation pertains to the grade level or years of education required for learners to read and understand the texts without any assistance, which

averages approximately 9.7 years of required education. This is nearly 10 years, making it a suitable level for first-year university EFL students.

The table below offers comprehensive data and information concerning the linguistic features of the 10 reading texts selected from Evolve 4 (special edition) used as input data in the online digital readability platform.

Table 4. The linguistic features, mean scores, and standard deviation scores of the 10 reading texts chosen from Evolve 4 (special edition)

Evolve 4 (special edition) Text#	Topic	Total Number of Sentences	Total Number of Words	Average number of syllables per word	Average Number of Words per Sentence	Lexical Density
T1	Smartphone lifeline	12	183	1.60	15.50	52.46
T2	It's # WORLD I	24	224	1.68	9.50	55.36
T3	STOP and GO	9	169	1.55	18.78	51.48
T4	THE STORY OF THE RAMP	15	225	1.73	16.80	52.78
T5	URBAN REGENERATION	24	446	1.52	18.58	52.24
T6	TOP 10 ACCIDENTAL DISCOVERIES	9	169	1.55	18.78	51.48
T7	INVENTIONS PODCAST	9	149	1.67	16.56	50.34
T8	FACT FILE: Islamic banking	11	146	1.64	13.72	47.95
T9	MANAGING WORKPLACE STRESS	15	291	1.53	19.33	51.38
T10	MORE THAN JUST A JERSEY	22	343	1.62	15.59	62.39
Mean	15	234.5	1	15.7	52.3	
SD	5.86	92.883	0	2.83	3.74	

The table above provides a breakdown of various linguistic features for the 10 reading texts selected from Evolve 4. These features include the total number of sentences, the total number of words, the average number of syllables per word, the average number of words per sentence, and the lexical density. Each text was analyzed based on these linguistic features using the online digital platform.

The results indicate that the total mean of sentences for all 10 reading texts is 15, with a standard deviation of 5.86. The mean of the total number of words in all the texts is 234.5, with a standard deviation of 92.883. The average number of syllables per word has a mean of 1, with no standard deviation. The average number of words per sentence has a mean of 15.7 and a standard deviation of 2.83. The average lexical density among all the texts is 52.3, with a standard deviation of 3.74. Overall, the results show that there is generally little variation among the scores of each feature, except for the total number of words per text, which has a larger standard deviation of 92.883. This indicates a significant variation in the length of the texts in terms of the number of words per text. Overall, the results show that there is generally little variation among the scores of each feature, except for the total number of words per text, which has a larger standard deviation of 92.883. This indicates a significant variation in the length of the texts in terms of the number of words per text.

The following table offers comprehensive information and data concerning the complex words and sentences found in the 10 selected reading texts from Evolve4 (special edition), which were utilized as input data in the online digital readability platform.

Table 5. The mean and standard deviation scores for complex words and sentences in the 10 reading texts selected from Evolve 4 (special edition)

Evolve 4 (special edition) Text#	Topic	Number of Complex Words	Percentage of Complex Words	Number of Complex Sentences	Percentage of Number of Complex Sentences
T1	Smartphone lifeline	27	14.75%	4	33.33%
T2	It's # WORLD I	32	14.16%	8	33.33%
T3	STOP and GO	14	8.28%	3	33.33%
T4	THE STORY OF THE RAMP	34	13.60%	5	33.33%
T5	URBAN REGENERATION	38	8.52%	8	33.33%
T6	TOP 10ACCIDENTAL DISCOVERIES	24	14.04%	4	44.44%
T7	INVENTIONS PODCAST	28	16.37%	3	33.33%
T8	FACT FILE: Islamic banking	25	17.24%	4	36.36%
T9	MANAGING WORKPLACE STRESS	32	11.15%	5	33.33%
T10	MORE THAN JUST A JERSEY	55	16.42%	6	27.27%
Mean		30.9	13.45%	5	34.13%
SD		10.17	3	1.7	4

The table above presents detailed information regarding the scores of all 10 texts used as input in this study, with a focus on the number and percentage of complex words and sentences per text. It also includes the mean and standard deviation for each category. The mean score for the total number of complex words across all 10 reading texts from Evolve4 is 30.9, with a standard deviation of 10.17. The total mean for the percentage of complex words among all 10 texts is 13.45%, and the standard deviation is only 3. Additionally, the total mean for the number of complex sentences among all 10 reading texts is 5, with a standard deviation of 1.7. The total mean for the percentage of complex sentences among all 10 texts is 34.13%, and the standard deviation is 4. These results suggest minimal variation in the numbers of complex words and sentences across the 10 reading texts from Evolve4 special edition used in this study.

To assess the readability of the cloze texts in this study, the researcher employed a scale used by Sari (2020) and Kalın (2017) to determine different readability levels based on student scores. Sari (2020) explained that scores between 40% - 60% suggest that students might require guidance in reading, scores above 60% indicate the text is easy for the target group, and scores below 40% suggest the text may be challenging. The table from Kalın (2017) served as a reference for interpreting the cloze test results.

The researcher utilized the table provided below to analyze and make sense of the scores obtained from the cloze tests employed in this research study.

Table 6. The interpretation of Cloze Test scores, with reference to Kalın's (2017) findings, as cited by Sari R. (2020)

Cloze Test Score	Purpose
>60 %	Unassisted Reading Level
40-60%	Instructional, Assisted Reading Level
Below 40%	Frustration level

The table below offers comprehensive data concerning the readability level of the 10 reading texts selected from Evolve4 (special edition) that were used in the cloze test to assess the readability level of the reading texts for first-year university EFL students.

Table 7. The Mean and Standard Deviation (SD) of Cloze Test Scores for the 10 reading texts chosen from Evolve4 (special edition)

Evolve 4 (special edition) Text#	Topic	Cloze Score	Test	Level of Difficulty
T1	Smartphone lifeline	40%		Instructional, assisted reading level
T2	It's # WORLD I	33%		Frustration level
T3	STOP and GO	44%		Instructional, assisted reading level
T4	THE STORY OF THE RAMP	39%		Frustration level
T5	URBAN REGENERATION	44%		Instructional, assisted reading level
T6	TOP 10ACCIDENTAL DISCOVERIES	37%		Frustration level
T7	INVENTIONS PODCAST	39%		Frustration level
T8	FACT FILE: Islamic banking	46%		Instructional, assisted reading level
T9	MANAGING WORKPLACE STRESS	38%		Frustration level
T10	MORE THAN JUST A JERSEY	37%		Frustration level
Mean		39.7%		Frustration level
SD		3.743		

The table above displays the scores for each text used in the cloze test, interpreted according to the difficulty scale by Kalın (2017) as cited in Sari R. (2020). Percentage scores for each text are calculated, and the mean score and standard deviation for all 10 texts from Evolve 4 used in the cloze test are determined. The table scores indicate that most texts in the cloze test are at the frustration level, including T2, T4, T6, T7, T9, and T10, with percentage scores below 40%. However, some texts are at an instructional, assisted reading level, such as T1 (40%), T3 (44%), T5 (44%), and T8 (46%) due to their percentage scores above 40%. The total mean percentage for all reading texts is 39.7%, falling into the frustration level. The total standard deviation among all the percentage scores is 3.743, suggesting limited variation among the scores obtained from different texts in the cloze test.

5. Discussion

This research aims to assess the readability of reading texts from the Evolve4 special edition, published by Cambridge University Press, which are used by EFL university students. The researcher utilized an online software platform with readability formulas and conducted cloze tests using the same reading texts. The findings demonstrate that the readability of the 10 selected texts, with a mean of 9.7, is suitable for university-level EFL students, requiring no assisted instruction. The small standard deviation (0.75) indicates minimal variation

among the texts. There is a positive correlation between the mean and standard deviation values, suggesting that the texts are appropriate for first-grade university EFL students with over 12 years of English education. While these students may not be native speakers, the texts are still within their readability level.

These findings are consistent with those obtained from the analysis of the linguistic features, where there is a positive correlation with the findings obtained from the five readability formulas used on the online software platform, as the results show that all the scores and values mentioned, from the linguistic analysis are consistent, as there is no big variation among the scores of each linguistic feature except for the score of the standard deviation for the total number of words per text which is 92.883. There is only a large variation among the 10 texts of Evolve4 in terms of the length of the texts or the number of words per text.

However, it's worth noting that the findings contradict the results of applying the Flesch Reading Ease Formula, as they show a negative correlation with the results obtained from applying the Flesch Reading Ease Formula to the same 10 reading texts from Evolve4. The mean of the 10 reading texts is 53.88, which indicates a fairly difficult readability level. The standard deviation is 4.61, reinforcing this result, as it shows minimal variation among the values of the reading texts. The mean of the total number of sentences in all 10 reading texts is 15, and the standard deviation among the scores of all the texts is 5.86. The mean of the total number of words in all the reading texts used in this study is 234.5, with a standard deviation of 92.883. The average number of syllables per word has a mean of 1, and the standard deviation among all the scores is 0. Moreover, the mean of the average number of words per sentence is 15.7, with a standard deviation of 2.83, while the average lexical density among all 10 texts used in this study is 52.3, with a standard deviation of 3.74. All these findings confirm that these texts are suitable for university-level students to read and understand. They are not overly long in terms of the number of words or sentences, making them accessible to university learners.

The data presented in Table 5, which includes the number and percentage of complex words, sentence means, and standard deviation scores for the 10 reading texts selected from Evolve4 (special edition), is consistent with the findings derived from the Flesch Reading Ease Formula, showing a positive correlation. The mean score for the total number of complex words in all 10 reading texts from Evolve4 is 30.9, with a standard deviation of 10.17. Additionally, the overall mean percentage of complex words across all 10 texts is 13.45%, with a standard deviation of 3. Conversely, the total mean for the number of complex sentences in the 10 reading texts is 5, and the standard deviation is 1.7. The total mean for the percentage of complex sentences across all 10 texts is 34.13%, with a standard deviation of 4. These results demonstrate minimal variation among the values of complex words and sentences in the 10 reading texts from Evolve4 used in this study. This uniformity might present a challenge for EFL university students when reading and comprehending the text without additional assistance. These findings align with the results of the cloze tests, indicating that the readability level of the 10 selected reading texts in this study is at a frustrating level. The total mean score for the readability level of all texts is 39.7%, with a standard deviation of 3.743. While there is some variation, it is not substantial, suggesting a consistent level of difficulty among the 10 reading texts. The cloze test results also demonstrate a positive correlation with the outcomes of the Flesch Reading Ease Formula.

To sum up, this research provides a comprehensive assessment of the readability of the 10 selected reading texts from the "Evolve4 special edition," aimed at EFL university students. The findings suggest that the majority of these texts exhibit a suitable level of readability for university-level EFL students, without the need for substantial assistance. The correlation between the results of the linguistic analysis and those derived from five readability formulas on an online software platform underscores the consistency of the research's outcomes. Notably, the Flesch Reading Ease Formula produces contrasting results, indicating a relatively challenging readability level. However, it's worth highlighting that the other linguistic features analyzed, including complex words and sentences, align with the Flesch Reading Ease Formula, confirming the texts' consistent level of difficulty. The cloze test results echo the challenging nature of these texts for EFL students, reinforcing the need for supplementary teaching strategies. In summary, this research underscores the importance of considering various factors, including linguistic features and formula-based assessments, when evaluating the readability of educational texts for EFL university students, facilitating informed decisions in curriculum development and instruction.

6. Recommendations

Based on the research findings, several recommendations can be put forth to improve the readability of the reading texts in the Evolve 4 special edition for EFL university students. Firstly, it is essential to consider text simplification, particularly for materials that may present challenges according to the Flesch Reading Ease Formula. Simplification or the provision of additional support for more complex texts can significantly aid

students in comprehending the content effectively. Secondly, there is a need to ensure diversity in the types of reading materials offered to students. Introducing a variety of materials, including shorter texts, different genres, and multimedia resources, can cater to the varied needs and preferences of learners. Thirdly, implementing reading strategy training sessions can equip EFL university students with the skills necessary to navigate and comprehend more challenging texts. These strategies empower students to tackle complex materials effectively.

Regular assessment is also crucial. Continuous monitoring of students' reading comprehension levels can help identify areas for improvement and enable adjustments to the materials accordingly. This allows for the tailoring of reading texts to the evolving needs and abilities of the students. Furthermore, establishing feedback mechanisms for students to share their experiences with the reading texts is essential. Encouraging students to voice their challenges and preferences will enable instructors and curriculum developers to make data-informed decisions for future material selections. Collaborating with EFL instructors to understand the specific needs and abilities of their students is highly recommended, as instructors can provide valuable insights into how the reading materials align with the curriculum and the actual proficiency levels of the students.

Additionally, considering the implementation of adaptive learning technologies or techniques to personalize the reading experience for individual students can be beneficial. This approach can cater to students with varying levels of English language proficiency. Finally, ensuring a gradual progression in the complexity of reading materials throughout the course is vital. This approach enables students to build their skills incrementally and become more comfortable with increasingly challenging texts.

In line with the guidance presented in "Implementing the Curriculum with Cambridge: A Guide for School Leaders (2021), English language instructors are advised to adopt a range of effective teaching approaches to facilitate student growth and readiness for contemporary challenges. This entails attentively listening to students in both classroom interactions and their submitted work, employing a diverse array of teaching strategies encompassing individual tasks, group activities, and whole-class instruction. Furthermore, instructors should emphasize regular assessments to monitor progress and provide students with the insights necessary to gauge their learning journey and areas for improvement. Encouraging a holistic understanding of academic subjects and striving for excellence within the context of students' developmental stages is pivotal. Teaching for deep comprehension, linking learning to various subjects and experiences, and consistently challenging students within their proximal zone of development are other integral components. The multifaceted application of assessment, the use of diverse teaching methods and activities, and the integration of information and communication technology into the classroom are crucial to delivering a comprehensive and engaging educational experience.

In summary, this research equips curriculum developers and EFL instructors with valuable guidance for improving reading materials designed for university students. It ultimately seeks to create a more effective and engaging learning experience. By adopting these recommendations and aligning them with Cambridge's teaching approach, educators can better prepare their students for modern life and facilitate their journey towards achieving their full potential in language learning.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, this research has provided valuable insights into the readability of reading texts for EFL university students, using the Evolve 4 special edition published by Cambridge University Press as an example. By employing online readability formulas and cloze tests, the study has effectively assessed the suitability of these texts, revealing their alignment with the needs of first-grade university EFL students. With a mean readability score of 9.7 and a small standard deviation, the findings indicate that the selected reading texts are generally well-matched to the requirements of university-level readers.

Building on these findings, we have proposed a range of recommendations aimed at enhancing the usability of the Evolve 4 reading texts. These recommendations encompass text simplification for more challenging materials, diversification of reading materials, the implementation of reading strategies training, regular assessments, soliciting student feedback, collaborating with instructors, exploring adaptive learning technologies, and ensuring a gradual progression in text complexity.

In closing, it is crucial for instructors to provide assisted instruction for EFL university students, enabling them to read and comprehend the Evolve 4 special edition reading texts effectively to achieve their desired learning outcomes. Instructors should employ a rich variety of activities to enhance language skills and utilize a diverse set of teaching strategies and cooperative work methods to facilitate text comprehension. Furthermore, instructors should remain attentive to factors influencing English reading text readability, such as students'

interests, prior knowledge, text style, format, and content. These considerations will collectively contribute to a more successful and rewarding educational experience for EFL university students.

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