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Examining the Alignment of Text Difficulty with CEFR Levels in the New Interchange Coursebooks for Adult English Learners

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فحص توافق صعوبة النصوص مع مستويات إطار (CEFR) في كتب " NEW INTERCHANGE" لتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية للبالغين

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ABSTRACT:

Coursebooks are vital sources of input in language classrooms. The current study aims to address the gap in research about using text readability and text complexity as indicators of text difficulty in English coursebooks for adult learners. It investigates whether the texts in the New Interchange series exhibit a consistent progression from easy to difficult and if they are graded in alignment with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) difficulty levels. To accomplish this, the Flesch Reading Ease formula and the TextEvaluator tool were utilized to assess the evolution of text difficulty. The results of the statistical analysis revealed that the texts' gradation shows a moderate correlation with readability and a strong correlation with text complexity. These findings indicate that the text difficulty in the studied series is aligned with the CEFR levels. The study's insights provide valuable information for editors, publishers, and instructors to accurately measure text difficulty and align it with the proficiency levels of their students.

Keywords: CEFR; New Interchange Series; Text Complexity; Text Gradation; Text Readability.

ملخص البحث

تعتبر الكتب الدراسية مصادر هامة في فصول تعليم اللغات، تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى سد فجوة نقص البحوث حول استخدام قابلية القراءة وتعقيد النصوص كمؤشرات لصعوبة النصوص في كتب اللغة الإنجليزية للمتعلمين البالغين، حيث تسعى إلى التحقق مما إذا كانت النصوص في سلسلة New Interchange تظهر تطورًا متصاعدا من النصوص السهلة إلى النصوص الصعبة، وإذا ما كانت مصنفة وفقًا لمستويات صعوبة الإطار الأوروبي المشترك (CEFR) من أجل تحقيق هذا الهدف، تم استخدام The Flesch Reading Ease formula وأداة تقييم النصوص (TextEvaluator) لتقدير تطور صعوبة النصوص. وقد تم إجراء تحليل إحصائي دقيق لاستكشاف العلاقة بين صعوبة النصوص ومستويات CEFR. وأظهرت نتائج التحليل أن تصنيف النصوص يظهر ارتباطًا معتدلاً مع قابلية القراءة وارتباطًا قويًا مع تعقيد النص. هذه النتائج تشير إلى أن صعوبة النصوص في السلسلة المدروسة تتو افق مع مستويات CEFR وبالتالي توفر هذه الدراسة معلومات ثمينة للمحررين والناشرين والمدرسين لقياس صعوبة النصوص بدقة ومطابقتها مع مستويات الكفاءة لدى طلابهم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: CEFR، سلسلة كتب New Interchange ، تعقيد النص، تصنيف النص، قابلية قراءة النص

1. Introduction:

Teaching English as a second language (TESL) involves selecting appropriate materials that cater to learners' language skills, needs, and abilities. Coursebooks play a crucial role in language education, providing a structured curriculum and graded texts for learners. Among the critical factors in coursebook selection is the readability of texts, which refers to the ease with which learners can understand the content (Kasule, 2011). However, little research has been conducted on the readability of texts within English coursebooks for adult learners, leaving a significant gap in our understanding of how these materials impact language development.

The lack of research on text readability in English coursebooks for adult learners creates a void in our knowledge of how these materials align with learners' proficiency levels. Understanding the relationship between text difficulty and learners' language abilities is crucial for creating effective and engaging language learning experiences. Bridging this gap will provide valuable insights for educators, coursebook designers, and researchers, facilitating informed decisions in coursebook selection and design.

The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the text readability of the popular "New Interchange" coursebook for adult English language learners. By examining the readability of the book's texts, we aim to identify any potential areas of improvement in the materials. Specifically, we aim to assess text readability using the Flesch Reading Ease formula and the TextEvaluator tool, two quantitative measures that provide valuable insights into the complexity of texts.

This research holds significant implications for language educators and learners alike. By examining the readability of texts within the "New Interchange" series, we can better understand how these materials align with learners' proficiency levels. The findings can guide language instructors in making informed decisions regarding the use of the "New Interchange" coursebook in their classes. Additionally, the study's results may contribute to the improvement of coursebook materials and instructional practices, ultimately enhancing language learning outcomes.

This study adopts a quantitative approach to assess the readability of texts within the "New Interchange" series. We used the Flesch Reading Ease formula and the TextEvaluator tool to analyze the linguistic features and complexity of the texts. A statistical analysis was conducted to explore the relationship between text readability and the CEFR levels. By employing rigorous methods and tools, this research seeks to provide valuable insights into the relationship between text difficulty and language proficiency levels.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Reading and Readability

Reading is a complex skill that involves many cognitive processes. Urquhart and Weir (1998, p.14) define reading as "dealing with language messages in written or printed form". They add that reading is "the process of receiving and interpreting information encoded in language" (Urquhart & Weir, 1998, p.22). According to Grabe (1991), Ur (2012), Li & Wilhelm (2008), and others, reading is an engaging endeavor that incorporates bottom-up, top-down, and interactive processes. By translating a succession of written symbols into their auditory equivalents and identifying letters and words, learners employ the bottom-up or lower-level processes to attention to meaning at the word and sentence level (Nunan, 1991). Understanding a text does not depend on its decoding (Nuttall, 1996). Language-based bottom-up processes involve analyzing the syntactic structure of phrases and comprehending the meaning of words and sentences to construct semantic units (Grabe, 2009). With practice, these procedures can become automatic, leading to fluent reading (Alderson, 2000). Learners use higher-level processes to accumulate meanings from meaning units to build a mental model of the text(s) and add their personal interpretations (Grabe, 2009). To reach the author's

intended meaning, the reader must engage in a persistent and dynamic struggle. Readers attempt to predict meaning by using their linguistic knowledge, their understanding of the world and the topic of the text. Additionally, there is interaction between the many linguistic characteristics within the text that characterises a written piece as a coherent whole rather than a collection of disconnected phrases (Grabe, 2009).

Some criteria should be determined to select texts for a given coursebook. According to Sung, Lin, Dyson, Chang, and Chen (2015), the key factor in selecting texts is ensuring their suitability based on learners' performance levels, which necessitates some form of text classification. However, categorizing texts through human judgment is limited. It is time-consuming, subjectivity is prevalent unless reliability and validity are established through multiple human judges, and even then, achieving consensus can be challenging. To overcome these challenges, an alternative approach is to utilize an automated tool that can assist educators in text classification through measuring text difficulty.

Readability is a method for leveling L2 texts. It uses objective quantitative linguistic features to predict text difficulty. It is determined using different readability formulas that take into account factors such as sentence length, word length, and vocabulary complexity. The goal of readability is to match the difficulty level of reading materials with the target readers' proficiency to support language learning and development (Srisunakrua & Chumworatayee, 2019). Since the 1920s, various methods have been accessible for evaluating the readability of texts in alphabetic languages. Among these methods are numeric readability metrics, commonly referred to as readability tests or formulae, which are widely utilized for assessing the readability of texts in natural languages. These metrics rely on straightforward factors like word length (in letters or syllables), sentence length, and occasionally word frequency measures. Moreover, they can be integrated into word processors to score documents automatically (Hong, Peng, Tseng, & Sung. 2020).

Ulusoy (2006) asserts that readability formulae only offer an approximate estimation of text readability. Over the years, linguists have created a large variety of these formulae, totaling more than two hundred. The fact that many of these formulae are no longer in common use or regarded as accurate measures of text readability should be noted. DuBay (2004) describes frequently used readability formulae. The Gunning Fog readability test, also known as the Fog Index, the Fry Readability method, the Flesch-Kincaid Formula, the original Dale and Chall method, and the McLaughlin SMOG formula are a few examples. These formulae share a common approach of estimating syntactic complexity and lexical density within texts to assess readability. Although there are additional readability formulae, they are not as well known or frequently used.

The Flesch reading ease formula is a well-known method for assessing the difficulty of a text by considering its sentence structure, word complexity, and syllable count. Developed by Rudolph Flesch in 1948 (DuBay, 2004), this formula is widely utilized in the field of education to evaluate the readability level of texts. The Flesch Reading Ease Readability Formula assigns a rating to texts on a scale of 100, with higher scores indicating easier comprehension. Typically, standard passages fall within a readability score range of 60 to 70. The formula conveniently presents the score as a U.S. grade level, allowing teachers, parents, librarians, and others to easily gauge the readability of a given text. The Flesch Reading Ease Readability Formula can be expressed as follows: $206.835 – (1.015 \times ASL) – (84.6 \times ASW)$. In this formula, ASL represents the Average Sentence Length, which is the total number of words divided by the number of sentences. ASW, on the other hand, represents the Average of Syllables per Word, which is the total number of syllables divided by the total number of words (Zamanian & Heydari, 2012).

However, readability is also defined as “the ease of reading created by the choice of content, style, design, and organization that fit the prior knowledge, reading skill, interest, and motivation of the audience” (DuBay, 2007, p. 6). Therefore, reading ease involves more than the linguistic features

that traditional readability formulae account for. For this reason, new tools, like the TextEvaluator tool exist. They measure a more encompassing notion which is text complexity (Reed & Kershaw-Herrera, 2016). TextEvaluator is a valuable resource used to assess the difficulty level of texts. It offers a comprehensive analysis of various linguistic features, including syntax, vocabulary, and cohesion, to determine text complexity (Sheehan, Kostin, Napolitano & Flor, 2014).

2.2. Text Complexity

Text complexity refers to the level of difficulty in reading and understanding a text. It is a broad concept that encompasses readability but also includes other factors that increase the overall difficulty of a text. It is determined by a combination of factors and considerations relating to the reader and task at hand. There are qualitative and quantitative measures that can evaluate text complexity (Hiebert & Van Sluys, 2013). Qualitative measures involve evaluating text characteristics that can only be assessed by the person reading the text. These measures consider aspects like levels of meaning, structure, language conventions, and knowledge demands. Quantitative measures, on the other hand, are objective. They determined using word length, sentence length, frequency of unfamiliar vocabulary terms, and text cohesion. The Common Core State Standards and other state frameworks use text complexity as a measure to determine how challenging a text is for students at their grade level (Castello, 2008).

The TextEvaluator tool is a text analysis tool designed to assist teachers and test developers in selecting texts for instruction and assessment purposes. It includes features that provide evidence about text complexity. The TextEvaluator offers insights into text complexity and genre. It consists of three complexity models tailored for informational, literary, and mixed texts. The tool assesses the ease or difficulty of cognitive processes involved in comprehending information, arguments, or stories within a text. It goes beyond traditional readability metrics by considering four types of cognitive processes involved in understanding a text. The four processes involve understanding individual words, using syntax to create meaningful sentences, making inferences across sentences, and using prior knowledge to create a coherent mental representation of the text (Sheehan et al., 2014). The TextEvaluator tool offers detailed information on text complexity through eight component scores. These scores are presented in a manner that helps users comprehend the overall readability metric given as a holistic score and ranging from 100 to 2000 (Napolitano, Sheehan & Mundkowsky, 2015). The eight component scores are Genre Bias (GB), Text Length (GL), Syntactic Complexity (SC), Vocabulary Difficulty (Voc), Academic Language Demand (Aca), Coherence (Coh), Organization (Org), and Knowledge Demands (Know). These components guide teachers and test designers through determining the specific areas of challenge in (Sheehan et al., 2014).

2.3. Text Alignment

Frameworks for language learning, such as the ACTFL proficiency framework, the CEFR, and the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), provide valuable guidelines for leveling learners' language competence and the difficulty of teaching materials, including readability (Council of Europe, 2001; Porter, McMaken, Hwang & Yang, 2011). Among these frameworks, the CEFR has gained significant prominence worldwide in educational policy-making (Council of Europe, 2020). The CEFR offers a comprehensive set of descriptors and levels to assess language proficiency across various domains, and its proficiency scale is widely used and recognized (Tannenbaum & Wylie, 2005).

The CEFR's global scale consists of three divisions: basic (A), independent (B), and proficient (C), each one of them is divided into two levels (breakthrough and waystage, threshold and vantage, effective operational proficiency and mastery) (Council of Europe, 2020). These levels provide clear guiding principles for language proficiency standards, assisting language teachers, curriculum developers, and testers in their work. Many language tests, such as TOEIC and TOEFL, have been

planned according to the CEFR, and curricula have been developed based on its framework (Tannenbaum & Wylie, 2005; Byram & Parmenter, 2012; Nagai, Ayano, Okada & Nakanish, 2013).

Text leveling, which involves sorting texts according to the proficiency level of the target audience, is an important aspect of language education. The CEFR's relevance to text leveling lies in its standardized and transparent framework, which allows texts to be categorized according to their difficulty level based on specific language skills, vocabulary range, and grammatical complexity (Council of Europe, 2020). However, it is important to note that the application of the CEFR's leveling criteria can sometimes be subjective and interpretations may vary among editors and publishers (Alderson, 2007; Westhoff, 2007). Additionally, teachers may face challenges in selecting texts at specific CEFR levels without proper training (Alderson, 2007; Westhoff, 2007). By aligning texts with the CEFR levels, educators and publishers ensure that learners are exposed to materials that suit their current language abilities, striking a balance between challenge and manageability (Council of Europe, 2020). This targeted approach promotes effective language development and engagement among learners (Council of Europe, 2020).

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are a set of academic guidelines in mathematics and English language arts/literacy (ELA) created by educators and experts from across the United States. These standards specify the knowledge and skills that students should possess at each grade level to be ready for college and careers. The CCSS aim to offer a clear and consistent understanding of students' learning objectives, enabling teachers and parents to support their educational development. Although the standards have been adopted by the majority of U.S. states, they have also sparked extensive debate and controversy (Sheehan et al., 2014). The Common Core State Standards align text difficulty and grade level by using a metric called Text Complexity. The standards provide guidelines for aligning textbooks with the appropriate reading levels for each grade (Sheehan, 2015).

3. Method

3.1. Research Questions

Text reading difficulty should be graded from easy to difficult when students are grouped by level. This research paper analyses and compares the readability of texts within the four volumes of the New Interchange coursebook, it seeks to address the following research questions:

1. Does the New Interchange coursebook series exhibit a consistent progression in text readability, with texts becoming more challenging as learners advance through the volumes, as measured by both the Flesch Reading Ease formula and the TextEvaluator tool?

2. Are the texts in the New Interchange series graded in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) difficulty levels??

3.2. Hypotheses

Based on the research questions, the following hypotheses are formulated:

1. The New Interchange coursebook series demonstrates a consistent progression in text readability from easy to difficult levels, as evidenced by both the Flesch Reading Ease formula and the TextEvaluator tool.

2. The CEFR difficulty levels are effectively utilized to grade the texts within the New Interchange series, aligning the materials with learners' language competence at specific proficiency levels.

3.3. The Corpora

The 60 texts included in the four volumes of the New Interchange coursebook was chosen to form the corpora of the current study. The New Interchange series, authored by Richards, Hull, and

Proctor in 2006, is widely recognized as a renowned coursebook series for adult learners of English. The series emphasizes a communicative and task-based approach to language learning. It incorporates captivating topics and prioritizes the development of both fluency and accuracy in language use according to the authors. The New Interchange books are popular for their comprehensive syllabus, which integrates various language elements such as ideas, structures, functions, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Additionally, these coursebooks adopt a multi-skills approach, ensuring learners have opportunities to enhance their language abilities across different language domains (Mahdizadeh & Aminafashar, 2022).

The fourth edition of the New Interchange series is used in the (CEIL) Center for Intensive Language Teaching of the university of Blida 1 for teaching English as a foreign language to adult learners. The CEIL is an institution specialized in teaching different languages, among which is English. This center offers accelerated learning programs, allowing learners to make rapid progress in acquiring language skills. The CEIL stands out for its intensive pedagogical approach, aiming to provide a complete immersion in the target language. The courses offered at the CEIL are designed to maximize learning time and enable learners to quickly develop their communication skills for academic, professional, or personal reasons (Bouchemaa, 2019).

The following table represents the titles of the texts under study, their coding, and the units to which they belong:

Table 1. Titles of the New Interchange Series' Texts

	Level A1	**Level A2**	**Level B1**	**Level B2**
Unit 1	/	A2T1: What's in a name	B1T1: Drew Barrymore actor, producer, director	B2T1: To Friend or Unfriend?
Unit 2	/	A2T2: Why do you need a job?	B1T2: New ways of getting around	B2T2: Help! How can I find a job?
Unit 3	/	A2T3: Tools for better shopping	B1T3: Break those bad habits	B2T3: Yes, No?
Unit 4	/	A2T4: Fergie from the black eyed peas	B1T4: Food and mood	B2T4: The changing world of blogging
Unit 5	A1T1: What are you doing?	A2T5: Stay at home dads	B1T5: Volunteer travel vacation with a difference	B2T5: Culture shock
Unit 6	A1T2: What's your schedule like?	A2T6: How often do you exercise?	B1T6: How to ask for a favor	B2T6: The value of upcycling
Unit 7	A1T3: Unusual Homes	A2T7: Vacation Posts	B1T7: Modern day treasure Hunters	B2T7: An ecotipping point
Unit 8	A1T4: Job profiles	A2T8: The world in one neighborhood	B1T8: Customs around the world	B2T8: Learning
Unit 9	A1T5: Eating for luck	A2T9: Dear Ken and Pixie.	B1T9: Are you falling in love	B2T9: Critical thinking
Unit 10	A1T6: An interview with Shawn Johnson	A2T10: Taking the risk	B1T10: Find the job that's right for you	B2T10: Tweet to eat

Unit 11	A1T7: What are you going to do on your birthday	A2T11: Greetings from	B1T11: Unusual Museums	B2T11: Milestones around the world
Unit 12	A1T8: 10 Simple Ways to Improve Your Health	A2T12: Rainforest remedies?	B1T12: From the Streets to the Screen	B2T12: The wrong stuff
Unit 13	A1T9: Edinburgh's Royal Mile	A2T13: To tip or not to tip	B1T13: Special effects	B2T13: The blue lights of silver cliff
Unit 14	A1T10: Did you have a good weekend?	A2T14: Things you can do to help the environment	B1T814: Pearls of wisdom	B2T14: Hooray for Bollywood!
Unit 15	A1T11: Turning pain to gain	A2T15: Cell phone etiquette	B1T15: The advice Circle	B2T15: How Serious is Plagiarism
Unit 16	A1T12: Around this weekend	A2T16: Setting personal goals	B1T16: The Truth about Lying	B2T16: Young and Gifted

3.4. Procedures

This study employed on-line text analysers that can rate text difficulty and thus determine the levels to which our texts belong. An on-line automatic readability checker programme was used as a tool to measure the reading ease of the texts according to the Flesch Reading Ease formula (readabilityformulas, 2023). The TextEvaluator tool was also used to measure the complexity of our texts (textevaluator.ets.org, 2023).

Table 2. The Flesch Reading Ease Score levels *(adapted from* Spadaro, D. C., Robinson, L. A., & Smith, L. T. (1980). Assessing readability of patient information materials. *American journal of hospital pharmacy*, *37*(2), 215-221.

Flesch Reading Ease Score	Readability Level/ Category	CEFR Level
0-30	College graduate/ Very Difficult	C2
30-40	College/ Difficult	C1
50-60	10-12th grade/ Fairly Difficult	B2
60-70	8-9th grade/ Standard	B1
70-80	7th grade/ Fairly Easy	A2
80-90	6th grade/ Easy	A2
90-100	5th grade/ Very Easy	A1

Furthermore, a statistical analysis was conducted to explore the relationship between text readability and the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) levels. This analysis aimed to ascertain whether the texts in the New Interchange series were graded in accordance with the CEFR difficulty levels.

4. Results

In order to find the relationship between the text gradation and their difficulty as measured by the Flesch Reading Ease formula and the TextEvaluator tool, we used the Pearson correlation formula to

calculate the correlation coefficient, which is a quantitative measure that relates to non-manipulated variables (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle, 2006). Our aim was to see whether text level of ease was a criterion for choosing the order in which texts appear in the coursebook series.

Table.3 below shows the texts gradation and the text difficulty measures.

Table3. Text Readability and Text Complexity Measures

	Text	Flesch Reading Ease	CEFR level	TextEvaluator
1	A1T1	92.2	**A1**	70
2	A1T2	101.1	**A1**	390
3	A1T3	82	**A2**	320
4	A1T4	77.3	**A2**	270
5	A1T5	80.8	**A2**	370
6	A1T6	98.6	**A1**	470
7	A1T7	75.4	**A2**	350
8	A1T8	84.1	**A2**	90
9	A1T9	89.4	**A2**	110
10	A1T10	91.7	**A1**	320
11	A1T11	85.7	**A2**	280
12	A1T12	75.1	**A2**	190
13	A2T1	66.8	**B1**	400
14	A2T2	80.5	**A2**	350
15	A2T3	75.3	**A2**	660
16	A2T4	80.6	**A2**	540
17	A2T5	97.7	**A1**	540
18	A2T6	77.2	**A2**	70
19	A2T7	78.8	**A2**	570
20	A2T8	61	**B1**	430
21	A2T9	88.8	**A2**	610
22	A2T10	82.2	**A2**	610
23	A2T11	76.2	**A2**	390
24	A2T12	69.2	**B1**	430
25	A2T13	82.1	**A2**	490
26	A2T14	72.5	**A2**	300
27	A2T15	75	**A2**	630
28	A2T16	80.9	**A2**	520
29	B1T1	75.1	**A2**	610
30	B1T2	84.6	**A2**	490
31	B1T3	77.4	**A2**	440
32	B1T4	81.5	**A2**	490
33	B1T5	56.9	**B2**	550
34	B1T6	82.5	**A2**	380
35	B1T7	76.7	**A2**	720
36	B1T8	67.3	**B1**	590

37	B1T9	83.2	**A2**	690
38	B1T10	68.8	**B1**	590
39	B1T11	51.3	**B2**	660
40	B1T12	67.3	**B1**	630
41	B1T13	60.1	**B1**	860
42	B1T14	67.9	**B1**	500
43	B1T15	89.9	**A2**	500
44	B1T16	80.7	**A2**	490
45	B2T1	77.5	**A2**	810
46	B2T2	75.8	**A2**	570
47	B2T3	79	**A2**	640
48	B2T4	59.5	**B2**	830
49	B2T5	72	**A2**	690
50	B2T6	68,3	**B1**	750
51	B2T7	62.8	**B1**	830
52	B2T8	52.2	**B2**	720
53	B2T9	59.3	**B2**	950
54	B2T10	59.9	**B2**	890
55	B2T11	56.5	**B2**	620
56	B2T12	61.6	**B1**	790
57	B2T13	73.2	**A2**	690
58	B2T14	63.2	**B1**	730
59	B2T15	63.2	**B1**	940
60	B2T16	61.8	**B1**	900

Table 4. presents a summary of the descriptive statistics for the variables utilized in the study, namely, the text gradation and the measurements of text difficulty through the Flesch Reading Ease formula and the TextEvaluator tool. The table displays the means, and (R) the association between text order and text difficulty in the following manner:

Table4. Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Coefficient

	Mean	**R: Pearson coefficient**
Texts gradation	30,5	
Flesch Reading Ease	74.920	-0.6538
TextEvaluator	538.500	0.8035

In the new Interchange series, we investigated the relationship between the text order and the measure of readability using the Flesch Reading Ease. The correlation coefficient (R), which measures the strength and direction of the linear relationship between the two variables (belghoul & Merrouche, 2021), was found to be -0.6538. This negative correlation coefficient indicates that as the text order increases, the readability, as measured by the Flesch Reading Ease, tends to decrease. In other words, as the text becomes more advanced following the CEFR levels, it becomes less readable or more challenging for readers (lower Flesch Reading Ease score). This relationship is moderate in strength but consistently negative, implying that as the text order progresses, the readability

diminishes.

We also examined the relationship between text gradation and text complexity as measured using the TextEvaluator tool. The correlation coefficient, was found to be 0.8035. This positive correlation coefficient suggests that texts that are chosen for higher levels are more complex and challenging according to the TextEvaluator tool. This finding implies that the course designers have effectively organized the texts in a way that ensures a gradual increase in complexity as learners progress through the Interchange series.

5. Discussion

The current study sought to investigate the relationship between text order and readability in the New Interchange coursebook series. By using the Flesch Reading Ease formula and the TextEvaluator tool, we examined whether the text readability increased gradually from easy to difficult levels and whether the CEFR difficulty levels were used to grade the texts.

Our findings revealed a moderate negative correlation between text order and the readability scores. This indicates that as the text order increases, the readability tends to decrease. In other words, as the texts progress to more advanced levels following the CEFR proficiency scale, they become less readable or more challenging for readers. This result aligns with previous research on text difficulty in language learning materials (Srisunakrua & Chumworatayee, 2019). The observed negative correlation suggests that the New Interchange series effectively provides a graded progression of text difficulty, supporting learners' language development as they advance through the coursebooks.

However, as evoked before, reading ease involves more than the superficial linguistic features that a readability formula such as the Flesch Reading Ease measures. For this reason, we investigated the relationship between text gradation and text complexity, as measured by the TextEvaluator tool. We found thus a strong positive correlation indicating that the texts selected for higher levels in the New Interchange series are indeed more complex and challenging according to the TextEvaluator tool. The use of this tool allowed for a comprehensive analysis of various linguistic features, including syntax, vocabulary, and cohesion, to determine text complexity. The strong positive correlation signifies that the course designers have successfully organized the texts in a manner that ensures a gradual increase in complexity as learners progress through the series. This aligns with the course's communicative and task-based approach, which aims to develop learners' language abilities across various language domains (Mahdizadeh & Aminafashar, 2022).

Our results support the idea that the New Interchange series is designed to provide a balanced and appropriate challenge for learners at different proficiency levels. Learners encounter increasingly complex texts as they advance through the course, facilitating their language development and proficiency growth, as suggested by previous research (Urquhart & Weir, 1998; Grabe, 2009). This targeted approach in text selection and grading enhances learners' engagement and promotes effective language learning.

The methodological approach employed in this study allowed us to accurately measure the readability and complexity of the texts. We utilized on-line text analysers, the Flesch Reading Ease formula, and the TextEvaluator tool, which provided objective and quantitative measures of text difficulty. This approach ensured the reliability and validity of our findings, making it a valuable contribution to the field of language education research.

Using the TextEvaluator tool in conjunction with the CEFR allows for a more precise and reliable evaluation of the texts' appropriateness for learners at different proficiency levels. It helps ensure that the coursebooks and teaching materials are adequately matched to the learners' language abilities, providing a more effective and tailored language learning experience. Additionally, this alignment with the CEFR ensures that learners are exposed to texts that challenge and enhance their

language skills in a systematic and progressive manner.

However, it is essential to acknowledge some limitations of our study. While we focused on the New Interchange series, it would be beneficial to include other coursebooks for comparison to generalize our findings. Additionally, the interpretation of text complexity can vary among individuals, and the selection of texts at specific CEFR levels may still have some degree of subjectivity (Alderson, 2007).

6. CONCLUSION

Our study highlights the significant relationship between text order and readability, as well as text gradation and complexity in the New Interchange coursebook series. The findings suggest that the New Interchange series offers a well-organized and carefully graded progression of text difficulty, providing learners with appropriate challenges at each level of proficiency. This targeted approach to text selection and grading supports learners' language development and promotes effective language learning. Our research contributes valuable insights for language teachers, curriculum designers, and language materials developers in creating language learning materials that cater to learners' proficiency levels. The New Interchange coursebook series has proven to be an effective resource for language learners at the CEIL, offering comprehensive and engaging materials that foster language development and proficiency growth.

Further research in this area could explore the impact of such graded texts on language learning outcomes and learners' language abilities over time. Another line of research can explore studying coursebook texts using less text-based tools. This can range from conducting qualitative analyses to observe how the texts are used in actual language classrooms. The qualitative analysis of the texts studies the content, the topics, themes, and cultural elements represented in the texts. Classroom-based research, on the other hand, can involve observing language teachers' instructional practices, learners' reactions and engagement with the texts, and the effectiveness of the texts in achieving specific learning objectives.

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