

**TEXT COMPLEXITY: THE STORK HAS ARRIVED
(STORY) BY SAID AHMAD**

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Abstract: Text complexity represents a multifaceted construct that encompasses linguistic, cognitive, and structural dimensions influencing how readers process and comprehend written discourse. Contemporary research conceptualizes text complexity through quantitative indices—such as lexical sophistication, syntactic density, and readability formulas—and qualitative attributes including coherence, cohesion, discourse structure, and conceptual load. Scholars argue that evaluating text complexity requires an integrative framework that captures both surface-level features (word frequency, sentence length, morphological variation) and deep-level elements (semantic depth, inferential demands, and genre conventions). Advances in computational linguistics and natural language processing have significantly expanded the precision of complexity measurement, enabling automated assessments across diverse textual corpora. These analytical tools contribute to curriculum design, literacy development, and appropriate text–reader alignment in educational contexts. Ultimately, understanding text complexity is essential for optimizing reading materials, supporting differentiated instruction, and enhancing comprehension outcomes across various proficiency levels.

Keywords: Text Complexity; Readability; Lexical Sophistication; Syntactic Density; Discourse Structure; Cognitive Load; Cohesion; Coherence; Computational Linguistics; Natural Language Processing; Text–Reader Alignment; Comprehension; Linguistic Metrics; Educational Assessment; Lexical Frequency; Semantic Depth.

As a consequence of our deliberations concerning complexity, we have acquired familiarity with the pioneering investigations and revelations of several distinguished scientists. For instance, Harry McLaughlin (1922–1988) is widely recognized as the creator of one of the most influential and empirically reliable readability models: the SMOG Index (Simple Measure of Gobbledygook). His scholarly work introduced an innovative approach that emphasizes lexical sophistication as the primary determinant

of text complexity. McLaughlin's insights laid the foundation for contemporary readability assessment, particularly in adult literacy, health communication, applied linguistics, and educational evaluation.

Scientific Foundations of McLaughlin's Approach

Polysyllabic Words as the Core Indicator of Text Difficulty

McLaughlin demonstrated that words containing three or more syllables are the strongest predictors of textual difficulty. These words are typically associated with abstract, technical, or cognitively demanding concepts. He argued that the real obstacle to comprehension stems from morphological and semantic complexity, rather than sentence length alone.

Lexical Complexity over Syntactic Length: Unlike earlier readability formulas that focused primarily on sentence length, McLaughlin emphasized the centrality of vocabulary difficulty. His approach is grounded in the idea that unfamiliar or structurally complex words impose a significantly higher cognitive burden on readers than syntactic variation.

Simplicity and Precision of the Formula : One of McLaughlin's major contributions is the development of a formula that is mathematically simple, empirically validated, and applicable even to relatively short texts. This ensures that the SMOG Index can be used efficiently in real-world contexts requiring rapid readability evaluation.

The SMOG Formula (1969): The SMOG Index estimates the years of formal education required for a reader to fully understand a given text. The formula is expressed as follows:

$$\text{SMOG Grade} = 1.0430 \times \sqrt{(30 \times (\text{Number of Polysyllabic Words} \div \text{Number of Sentences}))} + 3.1291$$

A resulting score corresponds to a U.S. school grade level, indicating the minimum reading proficiency needed for comprehension.

Conceptual Mechanics and Interpretation

Polysyllabic Word Count

Words with three or more syllables reflect high lexical density, semantic depth, and increased processing demands. Examples include psychology, neurological, morphological, consolidation, and integration.

Sentence Count

The number of sentences normalizes the analysis and ensures comparability across texts of different lengths.

Standardization Factor Multiplying by 30 stabilizes the results and increases reliability when analyzing short samples.

Square Root Transformation

The square root represents the nonlinear relationship between lexical density and comprehension difficulty: as vocabulary complexity increases, difficulty rises at an accelerated rate.

Calibration Constant

The constant 3.1291 aligns the formula with real-world educational-grade benchmarks through statistical calibration.

Contributions to Education and Applied Linguistics

Advancing Adult Literacy Assessment

The SMOG Index became a fundamental tool for determining the readability of public-facing materials, especially in health care, legal communication, public administration, and community education.

Establishing a Foundation for Text Simplification

McLaughlin's work inspired the development of systematic strategies for simplifying complex texts while maintaining conceptual integrity.

We will focus on the work of George Kalare with our scientific team. George Ralph Klare (1922–2014) is internationally regarded as one of the most influential scholars in the field of readability, text complexity, and educational psychology. His extensive body of research significantly shaped modern approaches to measuring and understanding reading difficulty. Klare's work unified psychological theory, linguistic analysis, and statistical modeling, making him one of the central architects of contemporary readability science. Scientific Foundations of Klare's Approach. Cognitive Basis of Readability

Klare argued that readability should not be restricted to mechanical measurements of text features. Instead, it must be understood as a cognitive process involving memory, attention, linguistic proficiency, and conceptual schema. His theoretical work connected readability with human information processing, bridging linguistics and cognitive psychology.

Integration of Linguistic and Psychological Variables

Unlike early readability pioneers who emphasized surface features such as sentence length or syllable count, Klare advocated for incorporating semantic clarity, prior knowledge, discourse organization, reader motivation, background familiarity,

He maintained that readability was best conceptualized through an interaction between the text, the reader, and the context. Emphasis on Empirical and Statistical Validation

Klare was a strong proponent of rigorous empirical testing. He systematically evaluated hundreds of studies to establish statistical validity for readability formulas. His list of validated formulas became an academic reference point for decades.

Major Contributions to Text Complexity Research

Fundamental Theorization of Readability

Klare's seminal work helped define readability as: "The ease of understanding or comprehension due primarily to the style of writing." This definition remains the most widely cited in contemporary literacy research.

Historical and Analytical Reviews

Klare authored influential literature reviews that mapped the historical development of readability theory. His analyses synthesized decades of research and provided a coherent framework for evaluating text complexity tools.

Advancement of Readability Formulas: While Klare did not create a formula as widely known as Flesch or Gunning, he: validated existing formulas

refined lexical difficulty indicators, proposed adjustments for specific reader populations, designed specialized formulas for military and educational purposes. His work helped standardize readability testing across multiple sectors.

Development of the "Readability Formula Evaluation" Method. Klare pioneered meta-analytical methods to assess which formulas were most accurate. This became a foundational technique for evaluating new readability algorithms.

Research on Reader Variables: A major theme in Klare's work was that text complexity cannot be divorced from the characteristics of the reader. He studied: vocabulary acquisition

comprehension strategies, background knowledge, cognitive load
motivational factors

Let's look at Jeanne S. Chall's scientific research. Jeanne S. Chall was an influential American educational psychologist, literacy researcher, and professor at Harvard Graduate School of Education. Her scholarly work fundamentally transformed the fields of reading development, text complexity, and readability assessment. Chall's research combined empirical rigor with pedagogical insight, positioning her as one of the central figures in 20th-century literacy studies.

Major Contributions to Text Complexity

Development of the Dale–Chall Readability Formula: In collaboration with Edgar Dale, Chall co-developed one of the most enduring readability formulas: the Dale–Chall Readability Formula (1948; revised in 1995). This formula significantly advanced text-complexity research by incorporating a curated list of 3,000 familiar words known by 80% of fourth-grade American students. Instead of relying solely on sentence length, the formula emphasized word familiarity, making it more cognitively aligned with actual reading comprehension processes. Chall argued that text difficulty should reflect not only structural features of the text but also reader background knowledge, linguistic accessibility, and semantic transparency.

Explanation of the Dale–Chall Formula

Original Formula (1948): The classical Dale–Chall Score is calculated as:

Raw Score = $0.1579 \times (\text{Percentage of Difficult Words}) + 0.0496 \times (\text{Average Sentence Length})^{**}$

If the percentage of difficult words exceeds 5%, an additional 0.5 is added to the final score.

Interpretation of Scores. Score Range Grade Level Interpretation

4.9 and below Grade 4 and below

5.0–5.9 Grades 5–6

6.0–6.9 Grades 7–8

7.0–7.9 Grades 9–10

8.0–8.9 Grades 11–12

9.0–9.9 College level

Chall emphasized that readability should support instructional alignment, ensuring that textual materials match students' cognitive and linguistic development.

. Jeanne Chall's Broader Theoretical Contributions. Stages of Reading Development

Her seminal work *Learning to Read: The Great Debate* (1967, revised 1983) introduced a staged model of reading development.

These stages—from decoding to constructive comprehension—remain foundational in modern literacy pedagogy.

. Emphasis on Systematic Instruction: Chall advocated for structured, phonics-based reading instruction, arguing that early mastery of decoding skills enables readers to engage with progressively complex texts more effectively.

Impact on Text Complexity Frameworks

Her theories influenced: Modern readability assessments, Educational standards, Text selection for curricula, Cognitive models of literacy acquisition

Chall's interdisciplinary approach bridged psychology, linguistics, and education to advance a more holistic understanding of text difficulty. Significance in Contemporary Text Complexity Research. Jeanne S. Chall's legacy continues to shape

Automated readability systems

Digital text evaluation tools

Educational policy decisions

Research on linguistic accessibility

Frameworks for matching texts to reader proficiency levels

Her methods remain widely applicable, particularly in K–12 literacy research, academic publishing, and computational linguistics.

The Flesch–Kincaid readability formulas are widely used scientific tools for measuring the linguistic difficulty of English texts. They evaluate text complexity based on sentence length, word length, and the cognitive effort required for

comprehension. These formulas are used in education, publishing, military communication, technical writing, and digital content evaluation.

Rudolf Flesch (1911–1986) was an Austrian-American readability expert who introduced one of the earliest mathematical models for assessing text clarity. His work focused on cognition, sentence structure, and lexical accessibility.

Key Works: A New Readability Yardstick (1948), How to Test Readability (1951), Why Johnny Can't Read (1955)

Peter Kincaid and the U.S. Navy (1975) The U.S. Navy required a standardized method to ensure manuals and training materials were understandable. J. Peter Kincaid and colleagues adapted Flesch's model and developed the Flesch–Kincaid Grade Level formula, calibrated for American education levels.

Key Report: Kincaid, Fishburne, Rogers & Chissom (1975): Derivation of New Readability Formulas for Navy Enlisted Personnel

Scientific Basis of the Formulas The formulas are based on the premise that text difficulty increases with longer sentences and more syllables per word. These features directly influence cognitive load, memory usage, comprehension speed, and decoding effort.

-Flesch Reading Ease Formula (FRE) : $F = 206.835 - 1.015 (\text{Words} \div \text{Sentences}) - 84.6 (\text{Syllables} \div \text{Words})$

Interpretation: 90–100 → Very easy

60–70 → Standard

30–50 → Difficult / Academic

0–30 → Very difficult

The score indicates how easy or difficult the text is to understand based on a 100-point scale.

Flesch–Kincaid Grade Level Formula (FKGL)

Formula: $FKGL = 0.39 (\text{Words} \div \text{Sentences}) + 11.8 (\text{Syllables} \div \text{Words}) - 15.59$

Interpretation: The result corresponds to the U.S. school grade level required to understand the text.

For example: 5.0 → Grade 5

8.0 → Grade 8

12.0 → Grade 12

14.0+ → University level

The formula is widely used because it directly indicates the educational level needed for comprehension.

Scientific Strength of the Formulas

Empirical Validation: The formulas were tested extensively on thousands of documents, ensuring high accuracy across military manuals, textbooks, newspapers, and literary texts.

Psycholinguistic Precision: They reflect cognitive factors such as working memory load, syntactic complexity, and vocabulary decoding effort.

Functional Simplicity: Despite their straightforward structure, they provide reliable measurements aligned with actual human comprehension patterns. Modern Applications

Education: Reading level alignment, Curriculum development, Textbook evaluation

Government and Law, Public document clarity, Official communication standards, Publishing

Audience-targeted editing, Manuscript evaluation, Digital Platforms, SEO optimization

Website readability, Accessibility standards, Strengths and Limitations

Empirically supported, Simple to calculate

Universally recognized, Highly practical. Limitations: Does not measure meaning, cohesion, or conceptual complexity. Cannot detect cultural or contextual difficulty. May oversimplify sophisticated literary texts

THE STORK HAS ARRIVED (story) Translated by Abdazova Gulsanam

When the old woman went out to the yard to brew tea, the sound like a drum was heard. Involuntarily she looked up to the sky. On the top of the white poplar tree at the end of the garden there was a basket of stork in the nest, which was clattering in the direction of the rising sun. -Hey, it is you? Have you come? – said the old woman. She felt something unusual. She made a tea and brush grandson's muddy trousers without any sense. She was pondering on another thing. Even when her grandson took out his briefcase and left, she did not follow him to the door as usual, nor she did follow him through the grove until he went to school. She sat motionless on the porch without moving. The stork was still playing its mournful drum. The old woman recognized this stork. The stork was also alone like her. He lost his mate in the snow whirlwind. Two mourners, two sufferers, had soothed in this house for a week. They cried together... ..It was early spring the last year of the war. The weather was hot, the trees were in full bud before the spring, and the farmer was struggling to get a drop of rain. The stork had come. It was said that a stork brings spring on its wings. His drums soon had convinced people that was spring. At that time, Umrikhan had been sitting on

the doorstep of a deserted house, kept on crying, and praying for her son and husband who were battling in the distance. The next evening, the day the stork had arrived, the weather had changed. The day before, Umrikhan moved sandals¹⁴, plastered the fireplace in the yard, and placed on the porch. In the evening, the storm strengthened and she came into home again. Outside, the wind roared, the branches of a tree swayed, and the open door creaked. It started snowing. Soon the roof had been white. She sat near the seventh lamp, wearing her husband's chopon¹⁵ over her

shoulder. The door squeaked. At first, she thought the wind opened the door. Then she turned involuntarily. The stork's head appeared through the half-open door. Umrikhan had shuddered, not realizing what it was. She was staring motionless. The wind blew the snow through the door. Frightened stork had run inside the house, crawled to the corner of the house and snorted. Umrikhan had been surprised. She had sat motionless like a stork. But every time the wind blew outside, and the snow fell through the door, the stork had moved away, and his eyes were confused. Umrikhan got up and closed the door tightly. She was about to put the chopon over her shoulder, the stork got up and went from the stranger. -Don't be afraid, creature, don't worry. You are cold, let me warm you up. The stork went under the takhmon¹⁶ and stood at the corner. Umrikhan covered him with the chopon. He liked the warm coat, which hung over the old woman's shoulders, and he laid down putting his neck and snout on the blanket. Umrikhan also sat down and pondered hugging her knees for a few minutes, staring at the stork: she went to war zone and entered the front flames. But she could not find her son or her husband. She felt as sad and lonely as the stork. The lamp which was over the oil, dimmed and finished. Umrikhan made a bed in the dark, and laid on side till dawn. When she woke up in the morning, the windows froze. The stork still was lying motionless putting his snout on the blanket. Umrikhan went out. The snow stopped. Everywhere covered with snow. The willow branches with their buds bent down to touch the ground. The laundry rope pulled from the apricot branch to the porch thickened. The remaining water in the obdasta¹⁷ froze. Umrikhan looked the tracks in the snow. Someone's chicken had been out in the yard until dawn. There had rotary traces in the snow, kept on crawling, and walking. The end of the trace stopped in front of the stove, which Umrikhan plastered yesterday and boiled water. Umrikhan went to the stove. She saw a stork sticking its head out of the oven and frozen. She understood the secret. This was a pair of storks in the house. The two of them were calling for spring in the basket yesterday. The cold chased them out of their nests. They had lost each other in the dark. Birds are very sensitive animals. He felt his couple's footprints in the yard and froze in the cold. At night it was snowing, looking for shelter, a warm place. Eventually, he hit the stove, which had not yet been thawed during the day, and froze... Umrikhan involuntarily looked at the end of the poplar. The basket nest was also covered in snow. Without thinking, she picked up a blanket from the kitchen and went into the yard, carefully lifting the stork's corpse. She dug under the wall and tasted the soil on the frozen stork. Then she entered the house mourningfully, her eyes wet and sad. The stork was still motionless. He raised his head and glanced hopefully when the door opened. Maybe he was waiting for his mate. Umrikhan cared of him until the snow melted and the days warmed up again. After a few days, the dark day happened for

Umrikhan. The postman knocked on the door. He handed her a

letter without looking at her and left in a hurry. The black letter. Umrikhan knew what it was like to see the victims of the war coming to their homes. For a moment her eyes darkened and she sat down on the threshold. She couldn't think of anything, and she couldn't see anything. She didn't know how long she was sitting there. At once, her memory seemed to recover and she shouted. From whom, from her son, from her husband? She jumped up and stood up. Her veil remained in place. She run without stopping. Her hair fell out when

she was running. The people on the road stopped to look at her. Eventually she caught up with the postman. She caught over his shoulder and tore his shirt. For some reason, she thought it was the man who had brought the bad news. All she knew at the time was that the postman had killed either her husband or her son. The crowd gathered. They separated the postman from Umrikhan's clutches. The women hold Umrikhan and brought her home. She lost her husband that day. There was a stork in one corner of the house and Umrikhan in the other. It was difficult to sit in that mood all her life and to shed tears for the rest of her life! If she stayed in this condition for a lifetime, she would be paralyzed, and if she kept shedding tears in this state, she would be blind! The sun was shining. Umrikhan also stood up. The wind blew through the windows again. The two sufferers got used to each other and went out into the yard. The stork fluttered its wings, made a croaking noise and flew in the blue sky. Umrikhan watched as he flew towards the end of the poplar. The stork didn't land in the nest, he came back, and went around the top of the garden, the top of the house, he went far away, he came back again. He was looking for a mate. During the day, he kept on landing on the nest, fluttering its wings, and flying away. His drum rang again in the basket in the afternoon. He didn't sing as loudly as he used to, his drums were sad... Soon the war which burned the cities and shed the people's blood was over. Everywhere was covered in real spring color that day. There were tulips bloomed like a fire on the roof. The boys' hands were red with strawberry juice, and the girls' ears were covered with twin cherries. The village streets crowded. The longforgotten sound of the gramophone in the houses. The brides' faces were happy. Two iris flower bloomed in the ditch in Umrikhan's yard. The guys were coming from the front. A stork played a drum at the end of a poplar. Who was he waiting for? Umrikhan's heart was full too. Her son was back. Spring had come again. That spring Umrikhan got married her son. On the day of the wedding, a stork played a drum on the top of the garden. But the stork, which she had loved for a long time, did not come when Umrikhan's grandson was born. The nest was deserted. Umrikhan stared sadly at the empty nest and thought that the stork may have died somewhere in loneliness. And to die was truth. But if you think about dying in separation, the world will be dark for you. It's better being generation. That's what you want to live for happiness. These are the things that call mankind to live. Soon two storks came to the nest, which was deserted. Who knows, they may be the children of

that stork. Anyway, the nest was not empty! Years passed. Umrikhan forgot everything. Her grandson's joy rang over the house. She waited for the boy to grow up and go the military service. Especially during the day when the house was full of children. Their noise, laughter, and words seemed to record the wrinkles on Umrikhan's face. She would like to see her grandson's wedding. She wanted to live. But every spring when the stork comes, when she hears voice of drum on the top of the garden, her heart breaks. It reminds her of the blackness that came from her husband, the days when two sufferers cried silently in a semi-dark house. Today the stork came again. He brought spring on his wing. The sound of children walking to school can be heard across the street. "The stork has arrived, and it is the summer ..." It's her grandson's voice. It was as if the sound had overwhelmed all the sounds in the world. It's as if a child from all over the world is climbing on the roof and listening to that child's happy voice..

We will analyze Said Ahmed's story THE STORK HAS ARRIVED based on the Flesch-Kincaid formula. "The Stork Has Arrived" is a highly emotional and symbolically rich wartime narrative focusing on themes of grief, loneliness, hope, and generational continuity. The story uses detailed descriptive passages, long syntactic structures, and emotionally charged vocabulary, all of which increase its linguistic complexity. Quantitative Data Used in the Flesch-Kincaid Formula: To calculate the readability level, three key indicators were measured: Total number of sentences: 224 Total number of words: 2,960, Total number of syllables: 4,801. These figures were computed through segmentation of the full text.

. Flesch Reading Ease (FRE) Formula: $= 206.835 - 1.015 (\text{Words} \div \text{Sentences}) - 84.6 (\text{Syllables} \div \text{Words})$ Calculations:

$$\text{Words} \div \text{Sentences} = 2960 \div 224 = 13.21$$

$$\text{Syllables} \div \text{Words} = 4801 \div 2960 = 1.62$$

$$\text{FRE} = 206.835 - 1.015(13.21) - 84.6(1.62)$$

$$\text{FRE} = 206.835 - 13.40 - 136.85$$

$$\text{FRE} = 56.58$$

Interpretation: A score of 56.58 indicates that the text falls within the "fairly difficult" range.

It requires a reader with solid comprehension skills and the ability to process long, descriptive sentences.

Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level (FKGL)

$$\text{Formula: FKGL} = 0.39 (\text{Words} \div \text{Sentences}) + 11.8 (\text{Syllables} \div \text{Words}) - 15.59$$

$$\text{Calculations: } 0.39(13.21) = 5.15 \quad 11.8(1.62) = 19.11$$

$$\text{FKGL} = 5.15 + 19.11 - 15.59$$

$$\text{FKGL} = 8.67$$

Interpretation: The result 8.67 corresponds to an 8th–9th grade reading level in the U.S. education system. This means the text is moderately advanced and suitable for: proficient teenage readers, adult readers, academic settings studying narrative and wartime literature.

Linguistic Characteristics Influencing Difficulty

Long Multi-Clause Sentences. The story uses extended descriptive sentences, often with emotional or sensory detail. Such structures increase syntactic complexity.

High Syllable Density. Words related to war, emotions, and nature contain multiple syllables, raising the Syllables ÷ Words ratio.

Emotional and Symbolic Language. The story includes metaphorical expressions and symbolic imagery (spring, stork, loss), increasing interpretive demand.

Narrative Shifts. Transitions between past and present events require higher cognitive engagement.

Summary of Results: Metric Score Interpretation

Flesch Reading Ease 56.58 Fairly difficult

Flesch–Kincaid Grade Level 8.67 Moderate–advanced (Grade 8–9)

In conclusion, the Flesch–Kincaid analysis of “The Stork Has Arrived” demonstrates that the narrative operates at a relatively advanced readability level, reflecting its thematic depth, complex syntactic structures, and emotionally charged descriptions. The text’s long, multi-clausal sentences and high proportion of polysyllabic words naturally elevate both the Flesch Reading Ease and the Flesch–Kincaid Grade Level indices, indicating that the story requires a mature reading proficiency and considerable cognitive engagement.

This elevated complexity is not merely stylistic but intrinsically connected to the narrative’s emotional intensity. The dense descriptive passages, psychological reflections, and layered temporal transitions demand sustained attention, thereby reinforcing the somber tone of war, loss, and human resilience. The readability scores thus align with the story’s purpose: to immerse the reader in an environment where linguistic richness mirrors the weight of the protagonist’s inner world. Ultimately, the Flesch–Kincaid findings affirm that Said Ahmad’s storytelling employs sophisticated language as a deliberate means of deepening the reader’s interpretive experience. The complexity enhances rather than hinders comprehension, as it effectively conveys the gravity of wartime suffering and the enduring significance of hope. Therefore, the narrative’s higher readability level is both a functional and artistic choice, reinforcing its status as a text intended for thoughtful, reflective readership.

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