

Writing for your readers: Tools and approaches

Extensive Reading Foundation Graded Reader List

<https://sites.google.com/site/erfgelist/>

- Found approximately 850 unique authors—many long-dead. True choice of language learner literature is still extremely limited.
- Monoculture—most graded readers are very similar.

Simple English Wikipedia

<http://simple.wikipedia.org>

- A great place to practice writing simply and get feedback. Plus, it helps learners.
- Their simplification/translation guidelines—<http://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:Contents>
- Find me at <http://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Gotanda> and <http://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:ELTted>

Edit Central

http://www.editcentral.com/gwt1/EditCentral.html#style_diction

- Flesch Reading Ease score. Quick and simple: simple to use, but also simplistic results.
- Basic comparison when in a hurry. Aimed at L1 readers. Old and paper-based, so ignores benefits of hypertext.
- Usable by students to pre-screen online extensive reading and help them make choices.
- More: Flesch R (1948). "A new readability yardstick". *Journal of Applied Psychology* 32: 221–233.
- Also, Online-Utility.org, Readability Calculator—http://www.online-utility.org/english/readability_test_and_improve.jsp

Compleat Lexical Tutor

<http://www.lextutor.ca/>

- The Swiss Army knife for opening cans of text and sorting our out words, word families, frequency, headwords, and text comparisons. Handles very large amounts of text/multiple files. Free, powerful, but a little intimidating at first. Advice: sit down with a friend for an hour and you can work it all out.
- Vocabprofile: Reduce lexical difficulty; focus on Academic Words
- Frequency: Identify words that raise headword count; select words for frequency increase in a text.
- Range & Text Lex Compare: Compare texts; simulate industry headword lists; monitor vocabulary recycling. I highly recommend reading Cobb, T. (2007). "Computing the vocabulary demands of L2 reading". *Language Learning & Technology*. Vol 11(3). pp. 38-63. <http://lt.msu.edu/vol11num3/pdf/cobb.pdf>. This article is partly a close analysis of a graded reader, but also a recipe to improve vocabulary recycling in your own.

Coh-Metrix

<http://cohmetrix.memphis.edu/cohmetrixpr/index.html>

- New readability index aimed at L2 readers. In their own words, “Coh-Metrix calculates the coherence of texts on a wide range of measures. It replaces common readability formulas by applying the latest in computational linguistics and linking this to the latest research in psycholinguistics.” Researched and tested in Japan with Japanese learners. Still new and relatively untested with literature or fiction. Fruitful area for someone looking for a research project.

A few interesting aspects:

- Concreteness/Hypernymy: Associations
- Syntactic indices: Parses: parts of speech; noun phrases; verb phrases; modifiers per noun phrases, etc.
- Syntax similarity: Similarity of adjacent structures—possible support for careful intuitive grading.
- Pronoun ratio: High pronoun ratio can predict comprehension difficulties. In all cases? Content area textbooks vs fiction. Make room for the author.
- Connectives: Additives, causal, logical, temporal—roughly, the more the more readable and better comprehension and retention.
- Coreference:
- Adjacent argument—When nouns repeat in nearby sentences.
- argument overlap—When sentences in a paragraph share nouns, pronouns, noun-phrases
- Adjacent stem overlap—Nearby examples or word elaboration and variation. Good for learners?

Coming soon...

“[W]e will develop Coh-GIT to analyze where the relevant cohesion relations are located in the text. This way, writers and educators cannot only predict the readability, comprehensibility, learnability, and appropriateness of a text for a particular reader group but also improve the problematic aspects of that text. Zwaan et al. (1995) has reported that reading times for sentences in narrative texts increase robustly with the number of coherence categories that have breaks in continuity (i.e., the current sentence being read is not coherently related to the previous context with respect to a particular coherence category).” (Coh-Metrix. <http://cohmetrix.memphis.edu/cohmetrixpr/metgit.html>)