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## TOWARDS A NEW MODEL OF READABILITY

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### Background

Underpinning definitions of readability are its emphasis on the elements which lead to comprehension, that is, upon the understanding of words and phrases, and relating ideas in the passage. Parts of the term also refer to a person's ability to read a given text at an optimum speed. Finally, this concept also includes motivational factors which will affect interest in reading a text. According to Dale and Chall, 1948 (cited in Gilliland, 1975) these three elements of the definition are not separate and they interact with each other to affect readability.

However, the measurement of readability has not generally reflected the definitions of readability (Gilliland, 1975). Readability measurement has usually involved an objective estimate of the difficulty level of reading material derived from a formula which takes into account sentence difficulty and vocabulary difficulty. Drawing from the above research findings the ideal readability concept as suggested by Chall, 1948 (cited in Chall, 1974) which involves the text and the reader does not exist. The readability concept tends to focus on the objective estimation of text comprehension difficulty without involving the readers of that text. Consequently, it is important to explore the concept of readability in order to find out whether this concept is still relevant to matching the reader and the text because its focus has changed.

### Research Questions

#### Aims of the Research

The aims of the current research study are as follows:

- To explore the factors operating during the interaction between a reader and a text which influence the concept of readability.
- To develop a preliminary new theoretical model and a new definition of readability.

### Methods

The design of this study is a collective case study. Each participant will be a case and we are going to explore in detail their reactions towards texts that they chose and which were chosen by us and their methods of making sense of both. This exploration will give us an explanation of the interactions going on between the readers and the texts. After collecting the data, we will look for patterns of factors influencing these readers' comprehension during the interactions between them and the texts. These factors will then be used to produce a hypothetical restatement of the model of readability.

### Frame

The literature review suggests that research into readability has generally been done using quantitative methods to assess text comprehensibility. It also suggests that this method has been widely criticised and more qualitative methods have more recently been employed to assess text comprehensibility. Through the literature review it is found the quantitative and qualitative methods both have strengths and limitations in assessing text comprehensibility. Therefore in this research we will explore the readability concept by combining these two research approaches.

### Research findings

The readability concept tends to focus on the objective estimation of text comprehension difficulty without involving the readers of that text Chall, (1948). Consequently, it is important to explore the concept of readability in order to find out whether this concept is still relevant to matching the reader and the text because its focus has changed. It is hoped that a new conceptualisation of the concept of readability will help people to choose suitable reading materials for themselves and others. In addition, in the educational context it remains important to do research in this area in order to face the challenge of providing suitable reading materials for students.