

Readability and Readability Formulas: English as a Foreign Language Tertiary Education Teachers' Awareness in Shaqra University, Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

This study is an attempt to investigate English as a Foreign Language (EFL) University teachers' awareness of the readability concept and formulas in Shaqra University, Saudi Arabia. The study also aims at investigating whether this awareness is affected by teachers' experience. A three-scale questionnaire was designed to gather data from randomly selected 40 EFL teachers. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS program. The results showed that EFL teachers have only an overall awareness of readability concept and are not aware of its formulas. The results also showed that there is a weak relationship between teachers' awareness of readability and their teaching experience. Based on the findings, the study recommended that the issue of readability and readability formulas should be included in EFL teachers' pre-service and/or in-service training programmes.

Key Words: readability, readability formulas, reading passages, EFL teachers

1. Introduction

The question of how teachers affect students' learning outcomes has got a full chance of attention in the body of research in the field of teaching and learning. Concerning English language teaching, teachers are regarded as the key figures in the learning process (Al-Seghayer, 2017); especially in a nonnative English language teaching and learning environment (Kabilan, 2007).

In order to guide students to a successful learning, Al-Seghayer (2017) believes that EFL/ESL teachers have to be aware of and possess certain critical competencies. One of these competencies could be the ability to match a selected reading passage to students' reading abilities; in other words, to make the reading passage comprehensible enough for learners to grasp and work on it. Endorsing this claim, Fry (1977) believes that one of the most important pedagogical decisions teachers should make is 'making the match', that is to provide students with suitably challenging reading passages. One way to do this is to focus on readability that could better help adjusting a reading passage difficulty with students' grade level, and reading abilities so that it is comprehensible.

Dealing with a foreign language, EFL teachers always care about the comprehensibility of reading passages offered to their students in a reading class, or even in a test of reading comprehension. The adoption of the strategy of readability and readability formulas will ensure the matching mentioned so far and the comprehensibility of the reading passage. Concurring with this, Varzaneh and Darani, (2018) argue that the notion of comprehensibility of a text is closely related to a most familiar notion in reading comprehension, namely, readability.

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According to the Oxford Dictionary of English (2010), readability is defined as the ease with which a written text may be read. For experts in the field of reading, however, the term readability is more specifically the 'problem of matching reader and text' (Gilliland, 1975) and it suggests the difficulty level of a reading passage by an objective numerical score obtained by applying a readability formula (Fry, 2002). Many other studies have also showed the importance of matching students with suitable reading passages at their individual levels to facilitate and enhance their learning and even to motivate the students (Fry, 2002; Gunning, 2003; Baker, 2019), which is the main concerns of readability. Those studies have commented on the prominent role of readability as an indicator of text comprehensibility (Nation, 2001; DuBay, 2004; Wray & Janan, 2013; Varzaneh & Darani, 2018). The findings of those studies should encourage EFL teachers to adopt readability and readability assessment (i.e., formulas) in their teaching; a matter that requires them to know, and to hone their knowledge of this concept.

Statement of the Problem

When teaching and / or testing a tertiary reading class, most English language teachers depend on ready-made textbooks, or internet comprehension passages without bearing the burden of applying the right criteria (Arias, 2007; Ghahroudi & Sheikhzadeh, 2017) that help choosing the suitable and readable reading passage that matches the students' reading abilities. Most English language textbook authors and publishers cannot be aware of some particular learner's needs and reading abilities in order to make crucial instructional decisions (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2018). Consequently, some reading selections chosen to teach or to test a reading class may be inappropriate concerning its length and lexical complexity. This may stem from the lack of knowledge of applying certain factors such as readability (Khang, 2010). Knowledge of the concept of readability and readability formulas is vital in helping EFL teachers choose an appropriate reading passage (Day, 1994; Kouamé, 2010; Khang, 2010; Janan & Wary, 2012).

According to the researchers' observation and direct interaction with a cohort of EFL teachers in different Saudi universities, one problem that needs to be stressed is the inadequate awareness of readability concept and formulas or even its absence among tertiary English language teachers in Saudi Arabia. Hence, the current study is an attempt to share the research on readability and the field of EFL teaching and learning. This has been done through investigating the extent of knowledge and awareness university EFL teachers in Saudi context regarding the issue of readability and readability formulas, the main objective of the given research.

No doubt that every additional year of experience matters as it equips a teacher with more knowledge and skills that help him/her doing his/her job for the benefit of students. Therefore, another objective of the current research is to shed light on the correlation between the years of teaching experience of the EFL teachers, on the one hand, and their awareness of readability concept and readability, on the other.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

- Based on the problem and research objectives, the study tries to answer the following questions:
- Are EFL teachers in Saudi universities aware of readability concept and formulas?
- Is there any relationship between their awareness and teaching experience?
- It is hypothesized that
- EFL teachers in Saudi universities are not aware of the concept of readability and readability formulas.
- There is no significant relationship between those teachers' awareness and teaching experience.

2. Literature Review

Readability and Readability Formulas

Various definitions of the concept of readability emphasize its association with the difficulty of reading passages and their comprehension on the part of the reader, the text, and the importance of interaction between the two (Baker, 2020 a). Several decades ago, Dale and Chall (1949) indicated that readability is the sum total of all elements within a given piece of printed material that affect the success of a group of readers. The success is the extent to which they understand it, read it at an optimal speed, and find it interesting. Further, Richards et al. (1992), defined readability as the degree of ease to which written materials can be read and understood. This notion of readability gained the support of other researchers as well (e.g., Chall & Dale, 1995, Prins & Ulijn, 1998), Pikulski, 2002, and Davids, 2002). These definitions indicate that readability depends upon many characteristics of the text and of the reader, some of which can be measured by particular formulas always referred to as readability formulas. This coincides with Fry (2002), who views readability as an objective numerical score obtained by applying a readability formula.

For Klare (1963), the readability formulas are mathematical equations that are used to determine or predict the level of reading ability necessary for the comprehension of a given reading passage in order to provide a rate of appropriate difficulty for the reader. These formulas are free, online computer software tools, activated by simply cut-and-paste techniques and they calculate various readability measurements, using formulas which go by different names such as the Dale-Chall Readability Formula, Coleman Liau index, Flesh Kincaid Grade Level, Automated Readability Index (ARI), and SMOG. For most of these formulas, the calculation is based on the number of sentences, the number of words, words per sentence, number of letters, letters per word, syllables per words, and passive sentences; which are mostly text factors. On the other hand, but not in depth, some readability formulas also include some reader factors as well.

Early work on readability studies could be dated back to the late 19th century (DuBay, 2004), and the first formula to measure readability was published in 1923 (Fry, 2002; Klare, 2000) in the search for objective methods to judge individual reading abilities, especially, with the advent of standardized reading passages (Gillam & Newbold, 2010). Agreeing with DuBay, Tabataaei and Mohammed (2013) believe that the book of Edward L. Thorndike, 'the teacher's word book', which appeared in 1921, was the first milestone of the vocabulary frequency listing of words in English. Thorndike's tabulations of the 10,000 word list by the frequency of use, had set the stage for the readability formulas. It provided teachers with an objective means for measuring the difficulty of words and texts; and laid the foundation for almost all the research on readability that followed (DuBay, 2004, Tabataaei & Mohammed, 2013).

When firstly appeared, readability studies generally focused on aspects of vocabulary such as difficulty, variety, and range (Chall, 1988). Later, attention turned to examinations of many different aspects, which were believed to be possible variables of difficulty in a reading passage (Chall, 1988). Over the years these variables have been transformed into semantic and syntactic factors, leaving the stylistic factors aside. Even today, the most established readability formulas test the comprehension of a reading passage using only a combination of two components, syntactic and semantic difficulty; the former is often measured by the average sentence length and the latter by the length of the words (number of letters or syllables) or the frequency of unfamiliar words (Fry, 2002; Gunning, 2003).

Readability and EFL Teachers

It is always argued that rather than simply knowing teaching techniques, successful EFL teachers have to develop a much broader base of pedagogical knowledge (Loughran, 2006). In the same line, Al-Mahrooqi, et al. (2015) added that the understanding of pedagogical knowledge categories enhances EFL teachers' success. Their results showed that teachers have a firm grasp on methods of, and approaches to teaching the elements of language including the four macro-skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. They added that successful EFL teachers also possess a vast experience in task planning and material design, and are knowledgeable about their students' needs. In reading classes, understanding a reading passage is among students' needs and, therefore, teachers should do their best to secure a suitable reading passage that matches their students' reading abilities.

However, Johnson (2000) claims that teachers generally underestimate the complexity of a reading passage; because when the teacher is familiar with the subject of the reading passage, s/he is unlikely to see the problem from the students' point of view. It is, therefore, recommended that readability be objectively determined using readability formulas. Teachers who are familiar with the topic of readability can determine the suitability of written materials for their students (Khang, 2010). Awareness of the readability concept and formulas will, therefore, help these teachers design or at least choose from a textbook or other sources tasks and reading passages that may more likely suit their students' needs and better match those students' reading levels and abilities. Such reading passages checked for their readability levels, are supposed to better achieve the predetermined teaching or testing goals.

In Saudi Arabia, educational institutions offer, through the different English language departments programs, course specifications which always include some suggested reading materials and textbooks to teach reading skill courses. Reading comprehension passages might be checked for their standards of difficulty. But in fact, whether the passages do really match students' level or not, is doubted, as these textbooks are always taken for granted and there were no studies to check their readability levels. It is presupposed that, being designed by well-known publishers, and for international use, they might have been assessed as regards their readability and suitability for the assigned levels. However, as students' levels are different, the burden comes on the EFL teacher to decide which passage to teach and which to drop, especially if given the authority to choose.

Having a clear picture of how to select and/or modify a reading passage in textbooks is particularly important in a foreign language teaching / learning setting, where there is a serious shortage of natural exposure to the target language and thus learning, to a large part, depends on textbooks (Varzaneh & Darani, 2018). In such situations, some knowledge and the adoption of readability concept will pave the way for teachers.

When it comes to testing and evaluating students in reading courses, the teacher always has the freedom to decide on a reading comprehension passage. Here again some knowledge and awareness of readability concept and formulas will be a good weapon for him/her to choose the appropriate reading passage that can really measure what is intended to measure.

Not only for reading courses, but for other English language programme courses in the plan , as well as other subjects taught in English (ESP courses, for instance) to non- English-major students, some awareness of the concept of readability will help EFL teachers write semantically and syntactically obvious and readable exam questions.

By examining the linguistic requirements for science textbooks, Fang (2006) supported this point of using readability to write comprehensible exam questions. He pointed out that language can constitute an obstacle for students to perform their best in assessment of their science knowledge and understanding, especially when the assessment is carried out verbally. Therefore,

the language used needs to be readable (i.e., easy and understandable). The principles at work here are those underpinning the concept of readability. Fang continued that without understanding the readability of assessment questions, the teacher risks to produce items that do not correctly match to the reading abilities of the learners for whom the assessment is planned.

If the readability level of a test item is higher than the reading ability of the test takers, then it is likely that the item assesses not the subject matter, but rather the test takers' reading abilities (Fang, 2006). Bearing in mind that in Saudi universities the teaching of ESP courses falls under the responsibilities of English departments, this again supports the researchers' view of the need of EFL teachers to be aware of readability concept and formulas. It helps them design exam questions that assess the construct or subject matter rather than testing the language.

It is worth mentioning that the notion of readability is a controversial issue. The formulas have been criticized a lot by some researchers in the field of reading comprehension studies, as well as teaching writing, particularly because most of these formulas are often based on only two variables (i.e., semantic and syntactic difficulty) which are measured by word length or frequency and sentence length. These two features only, may not be, as these researchers believe, sufficient predictors of language difficulty in a reading passage (to cite, for example, Chambers, 1983; Redish, 2000; Baker, 2020 b).

Despite these critiques, no one can deny the fact that the variable of vocabulary is one of the most important predictors of language complexity of a reading passage (Alderson, 2000; Stahl, 2003), and that the amount of familiar and unfamiliar vocabulary has its impact on the comprehension of a reading passage. Supporting this, Park (2020) believes that if individual words are correctly decoded, readers can then associate them with meaning by retrieving relevant lexical knowledge from memory and understand the written material. Hence, this claim towards vocabulary cannot be removed/omitted from readability formulas, as it is a very important predictor of language difficulty in a reading passage.

As for sentence length, it is also considered as an important factor that affects text readability. Schulz (1981) explains that "the sentence length variable can probably be generalized as a difficulty factor in any language, since the short-term memory span necessary for processing and decoding meaning is limited for all humans" (p.49). Therefore, it is logical that readability formulas involve sentence length as a factor to indicate the readability of a reading passage. Thus, readability formulas are very useful, they offer a more objective and easy-applied method of determining the suitability of a reading passage for the given learners (Fry, 2002).

Related Studies

Most of the reviewed literature focuses either on giving EFL teachers guidelines to select reading passages for teaching and/or testing reading comprehension including readability as one important factor besides other factors (Day, 1994; Arias, 2007), or on testing ready-made reading texts found therein in textbooks, in terms of their readability level (Kouamé, 2010). All those authors share the belief, as the current researchers, that teachers are expected to provide students with appropriate reading materials, as well as exam questions that match their reading level. Nevertheless, no research, to the best of researchers' knowledge, has dealt with the question whether those teachers (especially English teachers) really know about readability concept and formulas.

Day (1994) discussed seven factors emerging from some reading seminars he conducted with some EFL teachers from different nationalities on criteria used to select passages for their reading classes. Among these factors is readability. Day regards readability as a coverage of syntactic, lexical appropriateness and length of the passage. Besides, he believes that choosing appropriate texts for students is the most challenging duty for EFL teachers. In the same vein, Arias (2007) added that teachers can enhance the reading process by providing their students with appropriate texts checked for their readability levels. Similarly,

Ghahroudi and Sheikhzadeh (2017) declared that teachers should be fully aware about the concept of readability and ways of choosing the best text for the students.

Focusing on readability tests (i.e., readability formulas), Kouamé (2010) conducted a study to find out a means to improve the accuracy of evaluation documents intended for low-literate respondents for whom English is a second language. Borrowing an evaluation survey, the first group received a form that was checked for its readability level using the Flesch-Kincaid readability formula, whereas the second group received the original form. The results showed a better readability of the survey after the revision following the Flesch-Kincaid formula. The aim was to provide evaluators with logical reasons for using readability formulas. The article also intended to give tips on selecting the right readability formula to use for a certain project.

In similar manner, Khang (2010) investigated EFL teachers' perceptions towards the readability of authentic texts used in teaching reading in the Vietnamese context and the ways of modifying these texts to suit better the students' needs. His findings showed that the awareness of readability and text modification benefited both teachers and learners. Khang commented that, though his study subjects showed a positive awareness towards the importance of authentic text modification and the role of readability, they seem to be unaware of how to provide it. Such findings and comments support the current study's belief that EFL teachers need to be aware of the issue of readability which can help them in facilitating their teaching process.

Exploring primary school in-service teachers-trainees' abilities to determine reading passages readability, Kasule, (2011) concluded that readability research is beneficial to ESL learners' reading comprehension improvement in Swaziland, and that teachers' awareness of readability issues is helpful for effective teaching and learning.

These positive results towards readability and readability formulas incited the current study to investigate whether EFL teachers in Saudi universities are aware of readability concept and formulas to make use of them in their teaching. Concurring with these studies, the current study hopes to shed more light on the importance of the issue of readability adoption while selecting a reading passage for all other courses of English language programs in different English language departments in Saudi Arabia. Such a study could have clear pedagogical implications in the EFL fields.

To the best of the researchers' knowledge, no study had been conducted to examine EFL teachers' awareness of readability concept and formulas in Saudi context, or the relationship between this awareness and teachers' years of experience. Hence, the current study is an attempt to examine this significant issue.

3. Method

Research Design

The current study is a quantitative (survey) study that seeks to know about EFL teachers' awareness of the issue of readability. It also includes some correlational part as it focuses on the relationship between this awareness and those teachers' years of experience in teaching.

Research Population and Sample

The population of the current study consists of all male teachers from the six campuses and the Preparatory Year Programs of Shaqra University, Saudi Arabia, the second semester of the academic year 2019–2020 ($n = 64$). Randomly selected 40 teachers representing 62.5 % of the total population were selected as a sample for the study. Table (1) below illustrates the distribution of the sample by the campuses they belong to.

Table (1). The distribution of the sample by the campuses and percentages

Campus / Section	Number of Male Teachers	Sample Chosen	Percentage
Shaqra	8	5	62.5 %
Dawadmi	12	7	58 %
Gwaiaya	7	4	57 %
Thadiq	5	3	60 %
Sajir	5	3	60 %
Afeef	5	3	60 %
Preparatory Year	22	14	64 %

Their total years of experience in teaching English as a foreign language swing between 1 year to more than 16 years. Table (2) shows the study sample in terms of their years of experience.

Table (2). The study sample in terms of their years of experience

Years of experience	1-5	6-10	11-15	16 +
Number of teachers	4	9	14	13

Instruments

Data for the current research were collected through a self-designed questionnaire consisting of two parts. The first part targeted information about the respondents' years of experience in teaching English as a foreign language in a university setting, a matter that serves the second research question. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of 18 close-ended items of a three-point Likert scale: agree, neutral, and disagree. They aimed at investigating the respondents' awareness of readability concept and formulas for the benefit of the first research question.

Procedures

To validate the questionnaire, a pilot group of 15 respondents from the same population responded to the questionnaire. The purpose was to check the clarity and comprehensibility of the questionnaire items to improve their quality and elicit reliable data from respondents, according to Seliger and Shohamy (1989, p. 173).

Moreover, a group of five experts (three specialized in Education and Methodology, and two from the field of English language teaching) were also asked to validate the questionnaire. Accordingly, some statements were dropped, some were modified, and others were reordered. As advised by the panel of experts, the three-point scale of agree-neutral-disagree was

adopted instead of the five-point Likert scale. The SPSS analysis for the reliability of the questionnaire resulted in a Cronbach's alpha of .83 which is regarded as high internal consistency among the items; the square root showed a high validity of .90.

4. Results

The first objective of the current research aims at finding out whether EFL university teachers in Shaqra University are aware of the concept of readability concept and formulas. The analysis of the gathered data revealed the result that EFL teachers in Shaqra University are not fully aware of the concept of readability and readability formulas. They do have some knowledge of readability as regards its importance and usage, but they are not aware of the readability formulas. The descriptive statistics of the analyzed data and the detailed results are summarized in the following tables.

Table (3). Frequencies, valid percent, t-test, means, range, and p-values of the questionnaire's statements

No	Statements	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	t	Mean	Range	Sig. (2-tailed)
1	I have a good knowledge of the concept of readability.	32 (80 %)	3 (7.5 %)	5 (12.5 %)	6.153	1.33	1	.000
2	Some knowledge of readability is of good help for EFL teachers.	32 (80 %)	8 (20 %)	0 (0 %)	12.490	1.20	1	.000
3	I think readability has nothing to do with EFL/ESL teaching.	0 (0 %)	5 (12.5 %)	35 (87.5 %)	15.523	2.88	3	.000
4	I think readability has nothing to do with EFL/ESL learning.	1 (2.5 %)	0 (0 %)	39 (97.5 %)	19.000	2.95	3	.000
5	I am in favour of using readability in my teaching.	26 (65 %)	0 (0 %)	14 (35 %)	1.964	1.70	2	.027
6	I feel I need to increase my knowledge of the topic of readability.	31 (77.5 %)	8 (20 %)	1 (2.5 %)	9.11	1.25	1	.000
7	I am familiar with readability formulas.	15 (37.5 %)	13 (32.5 %)	12 (30 %)	.572	1.93	2	.570
8	I only know some of the readability formulas.	13 (32.5 %)	16 (40 %)	11 (27.5 %)	.404	1.95	2	.688
9	Readability formulas are easy to apply.	19 (47.5 %)	17 (42.5 %)	4 (10 %)	3.553	1.63	1	.001

10	Readability formulas only depend on certain semantic and syntactic variables to measure language complexity of a reading passage.	15 (37.5 %)	20 (50 %)	5 (12.5 %)	2.360	1.75	2	.023
11	Readability formulas ignore some specific reader factors such as interest and background knowledge as predictors of text difficulty.	8 (20 %)	20 (50 %)	12 (30 %)	.892	2.10	2	.378
12	Some readability formulas categorize a three-syllable word as being a 'difficult' word.	13 (32.5 %)	24 (60 %)	3 (7.5 %)	2.687	1.75	2	.011
13	I am aware of the importance of readability formulas in the process of EFL teaching.	25 (62.5 %)	14 (35 %)	1 (2.5 %)	6.958	1.40	1	.000
14	Using readability formulas will help modifying authentic reading passages intended for EFL/ESL learners.	28 (70 %)	12 (30 %)	0 (0 %)	9.539	1.30	1	.000
15	I use readability formulas when selecting a passage for teaching reading comprehension.	22 (55 %)	14 (35 %)	4 (10 %)	4.201	1.55	1	.000
16	I use readability formulas when selecting a passage for testing reading comprehension.	21 (52.5 %)	11 (27.5 %)	8 (20 %)	2.579	1.68	2	.014
17	I can decide exactly which readability formula to use for different reading comprehension passages.	25 (62.5 %)	9 (22.5 %)	6 (15 %)	4.002	1.53	1	.000
18	I have my own criteria for selecting a reading passage for my	22 (55 %)	13 (32.5 %)	5 (12.5 %)	3.775	1.58	1	.001

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Note: test value = 2

Being a three-point scale, the range for the means is according to the following table.

Table (4). The range of the means

Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1 to 1.66	1.67 to 2.33	2.34 to 3

Table 3 reveals that most of the respondents, 32 out of 40, with a frequency of 80 %, declared that they are aware of the concept of readability. A quick look at the responses to the first two statements proves this. Furthermore, it adds that the same 80 % of the respondents believe that some knowledge of readability is of a good help for EFL university teachers. This is also emphasized with t-test values of 6.153 and 12.490; and means of 1.33 and 1.20 respectively. Both means show an inclination towards "agree" as they fell in range 1.

Throughout the research, it has been proved that readability is deeply rooted in the process of teaching and learning of English as a foreign or second language. Referring to table (3), 87.5 % to 97.5 % of the respondents refused the notion that readability has nothing to do with EFL / ESL teaching and/or learning. The means for the third and the fourth statements 2.88 and 2.95 came in the range "disagree" according to table (4). This also pours in the direction that the research subjects are, to some extent, aware of the concept of readability. The results also revealed that 65 % of the respondents apply the concept of readability in their teaching, and despite the fact that they are aware of the concept of readability, 77.5% of the subjects prefer to increase their knowledge of the topic. The mean for the fifth statement, 1.70, showed a tendency to neutrality (range 2). The p-values for the six statements delineated the refusal of the null hypothesis that the EFL teachers in Shaqra University are not aware of the concept of readability; P-values < 0.05.

A sum of 62.5 % for those respondents who were either neutral or disagree with statement seven, and 67.5 % for statement eight with a frequency of 25 (statement 7) and

27 respondents (statement 8), showed that the subjects are not very familiar with readability formulas. The t-tests for both statements, .572 and .404; together with the means of 1.93 and 1.95 respectively, reflex a state of neutrality, range 2 "neutral." The p-values for the statements, .578, and .688 are greater than the level of significance .05 and therefore the null hypothesis, EFL teachers are not aware of the concept of readability and readability formulas, is accepted.

Half of the subjects, approximately, agreed that readability formulas are easy to apply. 19 out of 40, that is 47.5, with a t-test value which equals 3.553, and a mean of 1.63 has led the statement to be categorized under a state of 'agreement' with regards to table (4).

20 respondents were not sure whether the readability formulas do adopt semantic and syntactic factors as part of their calculations of a reading passage difficulty, and leave aside some specific reader factors like interest and background knowledge. 50 % were neutral compared to 37.5 % and 20 % who agreed to the specified statements (statements ten and eleven). The means for both statements; 1.75 and 2.10, respectively, fall in range 2 'neutral'. The 2-tailed significance for statement eleven is greater than the level of significance, .378. Furthermore, 60 percent (24 respondents), were also neutral to decide whether some readability

formulas categorize a three-syllable word as being a 'difficult' word. The mean for this statement, 1.75, falls under the umbrella of range 2, neutral. All this suggests that the research subjects are not fully aware of readability formulas.

Statements 13 and 14 seek to know whether the research subjects are aware of the importance of readability concept and formulas in modifying and simplifying authentic reading materials intended for EFL /ESL learners. About two-thirds of respondents, with percentages swinging between 62.5 % and 70%, have declared that they agree with both statements. The other third showed inclination to neutrality; with no remarkable state of disagreement (2.5 %). The means for both statements are 1.40 and 1.30 respectively, with t-tests of 6.958 and 9.539. Hence, both statements are categorized under range (1), agree. The p-values, which are less than the level of significance .05, leads researchers to refuse the null hypothesis and accept that the subjects have some awareness of readability.

Results from statements 15 and 16 showed that nearly half of the respondents reported using readability formulas when choosing a reading passage for the purpose of teaching or testing (M = 1.55 and 1.68, respectively). The other half either disagreed or is undecided.

Having knowledge of readability and its formulas will enable a teacher to decide which readability formula to apply when selecting or modifying various reading comprehension passages. Statement 17 of table (3) above shows that 25 respondents agree with the statement (62.5 %) compared to 16 respondents (37.5 %) a sum of those who disagree or are neutral. This has categorized the statement in range (1), with a t-test which equals 4.002 and a mean equals 1.53.

The last statement, statement 18, aims at knowing whether the subjects do apply other criteria, rather than readability, when selecting a reading passage for a reading class. 55 % of the subjects declared that they have their own criteria, whereas 12.5 % disagreed, and 32.5 % were neutral. The statistics showed a general tendency towards agreement, range(1) (M = 1.58; t = 3.775).

The second hypothesis of the present study seeks to find an answer to whether there is a statistically significant relationship between teachers' awareness of readability concept and formulas, on the one hand, and their years of teaching experience, on the other. Table (5) below displays the results of the Chi-square test and the Pearson correlation coefficient values. It illustrates that there is a weak positive relationship between the two variables. The correlation coefficient (r - value) is .25, with a p - value equal to .879, and a Chi-square of 2.367, with a 2-tailed significance equal to =0.883, and degree of frequency (df) of 6 for the total 40 respondents. This leads the researchers to the second study result that there is an in significant relationship between the EFL teachers' awareness of readability concept and formulas, on the one hand, and their years of experience in teaching English as a foreign language, on the other.

Table (5). Results of the Chi-square test and the Pearson correlation coefficient values

N	df	χ^2	Sig.	R - value	Sig.
40	6	2.367	0.883	0.25	0.879

5. Discussion

The current study is an attempt to investigate and depict the state of awareness of EFL teachers in Shaqra University regarding the issue of readability and readability formulas. Besides, it also sheds light on the relationship between the respondents' awareness and their experience in teaching English language in a university setting. Two research questions were formulated, and two hypotheses were generated. The statistics for the first question partially supported its hypothesis that EFL teachers are not aware of the concept of readability and readability formulas. To clarify this, most of the respondents confirmed that they have a good knowledge of readability as statement 1 shows an $N = 32$; 80 %. It was expected that this 80 % should have agreed with statements 9 – 12, a matter that would reflect their real awareness of the concept of readability and readability formulas. However, some of them were either neutral or showed a state of disagreement. This is interpreted as lack of in-depth knowledge and awareness of readability and readability formulas. Hence, the first result of the research was stated as that EFL university teachers in Shaqra University are not fully aware of the concept of readability. This result is in line with Khang (2010) who concluded that, though most EFL teachers are aware that readability and text modification benefit both teachers and learners, some teachers seem to be unaware of the issue of readability.

Concurring with the conclusions of (Kouamé, 2010) that readability formulas are often ignored, the p -values 0.570 and 0.688 for statements 5 and 6 respectively indicate that most of the respondents are not fully aware of the readability formulas, or ignored them. The current study also advocates the claims of (Day, 1994; Arias, 2007; Kasule, 2011) who stated that teachers' awareness and adoption of readability issues is helpful for effective EFL teaching and learning.

6. Conclusion

Reviewing previous studies on readability and quality of good EFL teachers, it was found that, to the knowledge of the researchers, no research has been done to investigate the relationship between readability and the awareness of EFL teachers in the area. Therefore, due to the limitations of previous studies, further studies are needed to enrich the literature on the topic. Consequently, this study attempts to fill the gaps in previous literature. This is done through investigating whether EFL teachers in Shaqra University are aware of the readability concept and formulas. Furthermore, the study also sought to know whether there is any significant relationship between teachers' awareness of the mentioned concept and their years of experience in teaching. The findings showed that the subjects are not fully aware of the readability issues, and that there is a weak, insignificant relationship ($R = .25$) between the subjects' awareness and their years of experience in teaching English as a foreign language. It is, hence, recommended that workshops are to be held to train EFL teachers on how to implement text readability assessment in their teaching, and that teacher training programs are to bear much concern to the issues of readability.

Being limited to knowing about EFL teachers' awareness of the concept of readability, it is suggested that further studies should encompass the investigation of the effects of teachers' adoption of readability in their teaching. Besides, investigation of the reasons beyond EFL teachers' negligence of readability and readability formulas are of paramount significance.

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