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Factors Affecting the Difficulty of a Narrative

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ABSTRACT

In order for students to acquire the skill of reading comprehension, which involves complex cognitive processes, the texts presented should be appropriate to their level. To this end, readability formulas are used in the literature to determine the suitability of texts for students' levels. The aim of this article is to reveal the limitations of the readability formulas of narrative texts and to investigate the factors affecting the difficulty of narrative texts based on the structural elements of narrative. For this purpose, firstly, the manifestations of the structural elements of narrative (story, discourse, focus, narrative levels, character, characterization, time, space) that affect text difficulty are concretized through basic examples and a list of factors affecting the difficulty of a narrative text is drawn up. In the article, it is tried to theoretically determine that the structural elements of narrative texts have an effect on the perceived difficulty in the reading comprehension process. It is believed that this study, prepared as a theoretical discussion, offers a different perspective in determining text difficulty. It is predicted that teachers can use the factors in the list presented in this study while preparing the materials to be used in the classroom and book authors can use the factors in the list presented in this study while preparing texts suitable for student level.

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Introduction

Language plays an active role in the transmission of thought, the experience of the external world, the mental connection between the world and human beings, and the linguistic expression and development of

knowledge. Texts used in language teaching to develop individuals' reading skills are tools to improve their knowledge of the outside world, learning processes, problem solving and critical thinking skills. In order to develop these skills and to select appropriate texts for a readership, it is first necessary to understand the text, so the methods and texts chosen may be more or less appropriate for the readership (Benjamin, 2012).

One of the methods used to determine the suitability of a text for a student's level is readability. Readability refers to how easy or difficult a text is to be understood. According to Klare (1974), readability is the comprehension of a text by a reader at a certain reading level, Mc Laughlin (1969) defined readability as the degree of comprehension and difficulty encountered by a reader at a certain level, Pikulski (2002) explained it as the ease or difficulty of a reader at a certain level to understand the text. In order to measure this level of difficulty, the variables used in the readability formulas are the length of the sentence, the length of the word and the frequency of the word. Formulas incorporating these variables have been included in literature through various forms of development and modernization of old formulas (Bormuth, 1966; Chall & Dale, 1995; Dale & Chall, 1948; Flesch, 1948; Fry, 1990). When the variables in these formulas are investigated, the following question arises: How consistent are the results of readability formulas that have been created without considering the distinction between text genres and the specific schematic and rhetorical structure of the text genre in terms of text difficulty?

According to Kintsch and Van Dijk (1978), discourse in a text has a semantic and schematic structure. These two structures are very important in terms of understanding and producing the text. Because if there is a conventionalized schema of the text genre in the mind, it is possible to mentally structure the text in a better way according to schematic categories (Kintsch & Van Dijk, 1978). Therefore, when evaluating a narrative text in terms of difficulty, calculating only its readability score and excluding the unique structural elements of the narrative from the process leads to the conclusion that it is correct to express something only uniformly and quantitatively, which is a false proposition. In fact, Bailin and Grafstein (2001) state that it is not possible to formulate the factors that reveal the difficulty of a text with a single method. It is therefore necessary to pay attention to the discourse structures of sentences, paragraphs and the whole text (Benjamin, 2012). This is because the assumptions underlying readability formulas are too simplistic and sometimes inadequate to account for a variety of linguistic and production factors that are very different (Benjamin, 2012). However, the most common

Table 1. Factors influencing the difficulty of narrative texts.

1. Story	1. 1. Number of stories
	1. 2. Story type (event-situation)
2. Discourse	2. 1. Direct discourse
	2. 2. Indirect discourse
	2. 3. Narrated speech
3. Narrative Levels	3. 1. Number of matrix narrative
	3. 2. Number of attached narrative
	3. 3. Number of metalepsis
4. Focalization	4. 1. Zero focalization
	4. 2. Internal focalization
	4. 2. 1. Fixed focalization
	4. 2. 2. Variable focalization
	4. 2. 3. Multiple focalization
	4. 3. External focalization
5. Character	5. 1. Number of character
	5. 2. The number of attributes the character qualities
	5. 2. 1. Physical qualities and their number
	5. 2. 2. Psychological qualities and their number
	5. 2. 3. Cognitive qualities and their number
	5. 2. 4. Sociological qualities and their number
	Development of character
	5. 3. Dynamic character
	5. 4. Stable character
6. Characterization	6. 1. Number of block characterization
	6. 1. 1. Number of explicit block characterization
	6. 1. 2. Number of implicit block characterization
	6. 2. Number of scattered characterization
	6. 2. 1. Number of explicit scattered characterization
	6. 2. 2. Number of implicit scattered characterization
7. Time	Order
	7. 1. Linear time
	7. 2. Anachrony
	7. 2. 1. Number of analepsis
	7. 2. 2. Number of prolepsis
	Duration
	7. 3. Number of scene
	7. 4. Number of summary
	7. 5. Number of ellipsis
	7. 6. Number of pause
8. Space	Number of space
	8. 1. Number of real space
	8. 2. Number of fictional space
	8. 3. Number of mixed space
	Space creation method
	8. 4. Number of places created with forward-looking references
	8. 5. Number of places created with retrospective references

problem with classical readability formula is that once a formula has been determined to be a good general predictor of a text's difficulty level, it can be used by educational publishers to create scientific texts at different levels (Benjamin, 2012; Davison & Kantor, 1982). If such a readability formula codes paragraphs with more frequent and shorter words and sentences as more readable than paragraphs with less frequent and longer words and sentences, then this formula will rate even the most difficult paragraph as readable if the most complex part of a text is

organized with more frequent and shorter words and sentences. Therefore, we will not be surprised by the conclusion that poetry, due to its structure of short lines, is a reader-friendly and not difficult text genre to understand. The research of Davison and Kantor (1982) also revealed this problem. When the researchers tried to edit the texts using readability formula, the changes they made were incompatible with what the formula suggested. The development of cognitive theories has played an important role in solving these problems and overcoming the inadequacy of readability formulas. Instead of grading a text according to the sum or average of surface features in a text, researchers have demonstrated that it would be more meaningful to determine the difficulty of a text according to the coherence, causality, connectivity and relationship networks between sentences in the text, based on the working principle of long-term memory and the way brain processes a text (Anderson & Pichert, 1978; Britton & Gülgöz, 1991; Kintsch, 1988; Kintsch & Van Dijk, 1978; McClelland & Rumelhart, 1981; Mcnamara & Kintsch, 1996). As research increasingly demonstrates, the human brain is structured to make sense of many complex relationships and narrative structures through metaphor or analogy (Fludernik, 2009). For example, narrative-based mental coding, or narrative reasoning is highly functional for retrieving information in short-term memory. In Gordon and Clark (1969) study of narrative reasoning skills, it was found that when participants memorized the given words as a list, they remembered only 13% of the words, whereas when they memorized them by transforming them into a narrative, they remembered almost 70%. Rumelhart's (1975) term *story grammar* is important in showing that readers can mentally store and recall a story by moving from the structural elements of the narrative, and that this can be explained schematically (Mahoney et al., 1997). In this regard, if it is assumed that the structural elements of the narrative are a constitutive and determining element, considering the unique rhetorical schema of the text genre and the way of thinking evolutionarily dependent on narrative reasoning, it will be revealed that the variables that make up the narrative in narrative texts also affect text difficulty.

The aim of this article is to emphasize the shortcomings of readability formula and to identify the factors affecting the difficulty of narrative texts. In order to achieve this aim, firstly, the structural elements of narrative are explained in accordance with the narratology literature. Then, the appearances of each main and sub-factor affecting the difficulty of narrative texts are given through examples. At the end of the article, a list of factors affecting the difficulty of narrative texts is presented. This list consists of 2 columns, with 8 main factors in the first column and

sub-factors in the second column. The main and sub-factors given here can be analyzed theoretically and teachers and publishers can benefit from these factors in text selection.

Observations on the Effect of Structural Elements of Narrative on Text Difficulty

According to Zwaan (2024), understanding narrative does not mean understanding language, but only understanding situations and events through language. According to Genette (1983), narrative refers to an oral or written discourse that undertakes to describe an event or a series of events. The events are based on causality and coherence. Thus, the pattern of causality that constitutes the series of events gets with it the structural elements that make up the narrative. Accordingly, the pattern of causality that constitutes the sequence of events brings the structural elements that make up the narrative with themselves. These elements appear in a narrative as story, discourse, focalization, narrator, character, characterization, time and space. Let us test the provocative proposition that the structural elements of narrative are variables that directly affect the readability of each element.

1. *Story* is the basic building block of a narrative. It is a chronological sequence of events or situations. For example:

Events:

- (a) Thomas' mother has died.
- (a1) Thomas met Kate at his mother's funeral.
- (a2) Thomas and Kate got married.
- (b) Thomas and Kate got divorced.

Situations:

- (c) The smoke from the tea on Thomas' desk.
- (c1) Thomas thinks about his loneliness with the smoke of the tea.
- (c2) The smell of cookies made by Thomas' mother.
- (d) The waiter picks up the empty glass from the table.

The events a and b above are called stories in the narrative. If the number of events experienced by Thomas had been more, the number of words, metaphors, references, adjectives, adverbs used in the text would have increased and at the same time the cognitive load for the reader would have multiplied and it would have been more difficult to order the events chronologically and remember them at the same time. The amount of

information the reader has to process is directly affected cognitively. In terms of the cognitive taxonomy, the above example of two main stories (a, b) creates a cognitive load of 2 units at the recall level, whereas if the sub-stories of the story (a1, a2,) are included, the cognitive load increases considerably. The sample stories above are action-orientated stories, in a sense they can be called stories under the influence of Phi Phenomenon: Died, met, married, divorced. It is mentally more comfortable to follow successive action patterns. For this reason, the moving nature of actions can be perceived more concretely and easily by the human mind, while the more abstract and static nature of stories consisting of immediate situations, feelings, thoughts and intuitions is more difficult for the reader to perceive.

If the above situations (c, c1, c2 and d) are considered as simple story fragments, they will make the reader part of a more abstract and inferential process, as stability and association will take up more space in the narrative. This will cause the text to be perceived more difficult. If we compare event stories, which by their very nature keep the students' sense of curiosity alive through the number of actions they contain, with situation stories, in which impressions and inferences are conveyed in a very detailed way on an abstract level, the number of students who will be eager to read the works of Chekhov and Proust will probably not be very high. Therefore, is it really possible to explain and measure the difficulty of two different types of story by a readability formula?

2. *Discourse*, mimesis and diegesis, that is, showing and telling, in a narrative can basically be called enunciation. Since the utterance is the linguistic performance of an individual produced in a particular context, in the case of a narrative text, the discourse belongs either to the character or to the narrator or to the narrator who is the character. The narrator's discourse is "the discourse that tells the story of the action events, but not of the word events that contain all the diegetic expressions; it also consists of the evaluative or interpretive statements of the narrator, if any" (Jahn, 2020), while the characters' discourse is "the discourse that consists of the narration of word events/words" (Jahn, 2020). Correspondingly, the type of discourse in the narrative determines the reader's distance from the text. For, according to Genette (1983) "Narrative 'representation' or, more exactly, narrative information, has its degrees: the narrative can furnish the reader with more or fewer details, and in a more or less direct way, and can thus seem (to adopt a common and convenient spatial metaphor, which is not to be taken literally) to keep at a greater or lesser distance from what it tells." Distance helps to determine the degree of certainty of the information, action, situation presented in the narrative and therefore its accuracy. In this regard, the discourse in a narrative is categorized as direct discourse, indirect discourse and narrated speech.

Direct discourse is the form of discourse in quotation marks that directly quotes the character's discourse and does not subject it to any evaluation, interpretation, addition, subtraction, concealment or revelation. Indirect discourse is discourse that summarizes the character's speech, interprets the situation, and also redesigns it grammatically. In narrative speech, the character's actions and situations are described as an event, and it is the discourse type with the highest level of reduction. Let us analyze these types of discourse through the story of Thomas and Kate:

- a. I saw Kate at my mother's funeral, I crumpled up the handkerchief in my hand and took a few steps toward Kate: "Kate, I blame myself for my misplaced happiness in seeing you at a time when I felt lonely and empty."
- b. I saw Kate at my mother's funeral, I crumpled up the handkerchief in my hand and took a few steps toward Kate, I told her that I felt lonely and empty and that I felt guilty for my misplaced happiness in seeing her at a time when I felt lonely and empty.
- c. Thomas saw Kate at his mother's funeral, crumpled up the handkerchief in his hand, took a few steps toward Kate, told her that he felt lonely and empty and that he felt guilty for the happiness he felt when he saw her.

Since direct discourse (a) is a form of discourse that leaves the character alone with the reader and the distance is the least, this type of speech is a mimetic speech and is a scene that the reader can easily visualize in reader's mind. Because the narrator doesn't come between the reader and the character, the reader has less hesitation about whether the utterance belongs to the narrator or the character, and can easily identify the owner of the utterance and make sense of the text.

Since indirect discourse (b) comes between the reader and the character -although it is a type of discourse that does not completely lose its mimetic structure- the cognitive load on the mind increases directly because it is more difficult to identify the source of the utterance.

In narrated speech (c), the narrator's voice overrides the character's voice and the character's speech is conveyed as an event. It is clear that the example discourse types here are structural elements that affect the difficulty of the text and at the same time directly shape the number of words, metaphors and references reflected on the text surface. This is because the cognitive load and the indicators required for mental comprehension of the three different discourse types are different.

3. *Focalization*: Although focalization is a concept that Genette (1983) deals with under the category of mood, it also dominates all other elements from narrator to discourse, from space to character. It is one of the

constitutive elements that determine where the narrator will place the focus, what information about the character(s) in the narrative will be included in the frame, what will remain in the dark or light, what will be left blurred, in short, the limits of the level of knowledge about the character. Focalization is a structure that structures perception in a narrative and at some point directs the reader's consciousness and cognitive processes. The types of focalization are classified as zero focalization, internal focalization (there are three different subtypes: fixed, variable and multiple focalization) and external focalization.

Accordingly, it is possible to formulate the information relationship between the narrator and the character according to the types of focalization:

Zero focalization= (narrator>character),

Internal focalization= (narrator=character),

External focalization= (narrator<character).

Let us continue with examples that show that the information and cognitive load in these forms of focalisations are not equal:

- a. Although Thomas was a man who hated crowd, that day he saw Kate in the crowd that day, and while his excitement at his sadness made him feel ashamed, he took a few steps toward Kate with a childish embarrassment in his voice and said "Kate, I blame myself for my unwarranted happiness at seeing you at a time when I felt lonely and empty." (Zero Focalization)
- b. I saw Kate in the crowd. I felt ashamed of my excitement at seeing her on a day when my mother had died. This shame did not stop me and I took a few steps toward Kate: "Kate, I blame myself for my misplaced happiness at seeing you at a time when I felt lonely and empty." (Internal Focalization - Internal Focalization Thomas)

That day I went to Thomas' mother's funeral, it was very crowded. When I looked up, I saw Thomas taking a few steps toward me, I started thinking about what to say to him, many possible dialogues went through my mind and I had to choose one, how difficult it was for me to talk to people on such days. Thomas smiled sadly, took the handkerchief he had crumpled in his right hand in his left, and shook my hand. He told me that he felt lonely, that he was happy to see me, but that this happiness made him feel guilty. Of course I was stunned by this response. (Internal Focalization - Internal Focalization Kate)

b1) I saw Kate in the crowd. I felt ashamed of my excitement at seeing her on a day when my mother had died. This shame did not stop me and I took a few steps toward Kate: “Kate, I blame myself for my misplaced happiness at seeing you at a time when I felt lonely and empty.” (Fixed Focalization - the event is narrated from Thomas’ focus)

b2) That day I went to Thomas’ mother’s funeral and it was very crowded. I looked up and saw Thomas taking a few steps toward me. He took the crumpled handkerchief in his right hand, put it in his left hand and shook my hand. He told me that he felt lonely, that he was happy to see me, but at the same time that happiness made him feel guilty.

I saw Kate in the crowd and felt ashamed of my excitement at seeing her on a day when my mother had died. This shame did not stop me and I took a few steps toward Kate: “Kate, I blame myself for my misplaced happiness at seeing you at a time when I felt lonely and empty.” (Multiple focalization -the same event is reported from both Kate’s and Thomas’ focus)

b3) The events are reported from the focus of Thomas, Kate and Kate’s friend. To give a clearer example, in Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*, the focus is on “Charles before Madame Bovary, then Emma, then Charles again” (Dervişcemaloğlu, 2016). (Variable Focalization)

c) The hall was crowded. There was a sad look on people’s faces. Thomas could be seen walking toward the fireplace where Kate was standing, holding a crumpled handkerchief tightly in his hand. Thomas held out his right hand to shake Kate’s, and patted her on the back with his left, saying he was glad to see her. (External Focus)

Let’s find out the number of information contained in the focalization examples a, b (b1, b2, b3), c:

A. Zero focalization

1. Thomas does not like crowds.
2. Thomas’ dislike of crowds to the point of disgust.
3. Thomas feels emotionally guilty.
4. Thomas has a psychology and depth (ability to identify the emotional state he is in) that can experience opposite emotions at the same time (lonely vs empty, unhappy vs misplaced happiness/happiness).
5. Thomas is experiencing a feeling of shame.
6. Thomas’ shame is childish.
7. Thomas feels guilty.
8. The fact that Thomas already knows Kate (implicit knowledge).

B. Internal focus

Thomas

1. Thomas doesn't like crowds.
2. Thomas dislikes crowds to the point of disgust.
3. Thomas feels emotionally guilty
4. Thomas has a psychology and depth (ability to identify the emotional state he is in) that can experience opposite emotions at the same time (lonely vs empty, unhappy X misplaced happiness/happiness).
5. Thomas is experiencing a feeling of shame.
6. The childishness of Thomas' shame.
7. Thomas feeling guilty.
8. The fact that Thomas already knows Kate (implicit knowledge).

Kate:

1. Kate already knows Thomas (implicit knowledge).
2. Kate has difficulty speaking in unfavorable situations (e.g. death).
3. Kate's internal anxiety about her inability to speak in unfavorable situations.
4. Thomas' surprise at what Thomas said.
5. Kate remaining passive due to confusion.

Kate's friend*

*It is ipso facto assumed that information about Kate's friend will also be included here.

C. External focalization**.

1. Knowledge that the ceremony was visually crowded.
2. The short distance between him and Kate (expression of a few steps).
3. Thomas' conversation with Kate (the emotions and thoughts in the content are not given by the narrator).

**In this form of focalization the actions of the characters reveal only what can be perceived with the senses, as if they were being recorded by a camera, and there is no intellectual inference, trace, inner evaluation of the characters. Accordingly, the only information obtained about the character -almost like the result of an objective observation report- is *happiness*.

When we consider the question of what kind of information can be obtained in this ordinary encounter story in terms of focalization types C, A and B, it becomes clear that the cognitive load imposed on the reader is not the same in each focalization type. It is clear that the amount of information is greater in focalization types A and B than in

focalization type C. In focalization type C, the information load is less because it is limited to the senses, but it is not possible to penetrate into the depths of the character. External focalization can be seen as a focalization that is relatively distant from the human mind's ability to produce narrative. This is because the probability of encountering texts produced with an external focalization is quantitatively lower. This form of focalization is more materialistic, more sensory - predominantly visual - and more objective and strictly empirical. However, if we look diachronically at forms of focalization - fairy tales, legends, fables, etc. - it becomes clear that zero focalization is the form of focalization that has long been known and experienced in the collective mental narrative schema. This supports the idea that zero focalization is a more cognitively recognizable narrative 'form'. However, a question arises at this point: Does the presence of a narrator, the presence of another person between the reader and the character, affect the cognitive load of the reader's mind to cope with the difficulty of the text? Kucer's (2009) research on this issue is very important. Because according to the research, the change of time, place and narrator in the narrative affected students' comprehension skills, and as the frequency of change increased, this skill was negatively affected.

According to Dunbar (1996), the reader's main interest is in character and plot because "We want the intimate details, the gossip, their innermost thoughts and feelings, not detailed technical analysis of method acting or parliamentary procedure. We want to know how events affected them, how they reacted to the highs and lows of life, what they thought about their friends and relations, the indignities they suffered, the triumphs they took part in."

If this is what is expected of a narrative, how does the internal focus, where the narrator is the character, affect the difficulty? Research shows that first-person narrator allows the reader to better empathize with the character and the effect of shift the focus of attention (Jin & Liu, 2023; Kaufman & Libby, 2012; Keen, 2006; Kucer, 2009; Nikolajeva, 2014). Therefore, the comfort that this form of focus creates for the reader will be greater than the others. To be close to the character - in his/her mind, soul, shame, etc. - and to see the events from his point of view, is to be confronted with an essentially modern narrative. Narratives in which the individual is at the forefront, in an unmediated transmission, can provide faster identification, the cognitive load for the reader is reduced, and the character's approach to events becomes predictable and comprehensible. So why are diaries, autobiographical narratives, memories, personal experiences interesting? These and similar questions and their answers will be very important for future research.

4. *Narrative Levels*: Narrative can be realized on many levels, as *tales within tales* or matrix narratives. In other words, a character can start

telling own story within a narrative, as a result of which the story is telling “turns into an attached narrative or sub-narrative” (Jahn, 2020). Genette (1983), on the other hand, classifies the narrative levels that he analyses under the title of “voice” as extradiegetic level (outside the story), intradiegetic level (inside the story) and metadiegetic level (above the story). According to Genette (1983), narrative levels function as a threshold in the transition between diegetic levels. If Thomas and Kate’s encounter at the funeral is considered as a frame (matrix) narrative, the narrator’s making room for another character in the story -for example, the narrator returning to the conversation between Thomas’ mother and Adam by the fireplace in the past and taking Adam’s discourse on the narrator -will affect the difficulty for the reader. Because while the mental focus is on Thomas and Kate, another character (Adam) will push these two focus into the background.

From an utterance point of view, questions such as who is speaking and who is acting will arise. In this regard, metalepsis may appear as an element that increases the difficulty within the heading of narrative levels. Sometimes the narrator does this with a sentence addressed to the reader-the narrator may ask a question like “*Hey reader, can you hear me?*”-other times, the narrator takes over the character’s speech and disrupts the discourse. Therefore, the loss of clarity of narrative levels within the narrative, the multiplicity of additional narratives outside the frame narrative, and the frequency with which the narrator resorts to metalepsis become factors that increase the reader’s cognitive load, strain reader’s ability to concentrate, and naturally cause the text to be perceived as difficult.

5. *Character*: The equivalent of the act of *doing* in a narrative is defined as the narrative element that realizes events and situations. The character or characters are the mental focus, that is, the constituent element that appears as the subject. If we look at the characters in a traditional tale, our mental template for characters is quite clear: There is a *hero* at the center, and the figurative characters who perform certain functions to help him/her are erased and lost in the story as they fulfill their functions throughout the story. If the reader is asked who the hero of the story is, what kind of a person is, the reader will list a few one-dimensional, not very difficult to remember characteristics such as the hero’s name “X”, brave, adventurous, angry, happy, etc. Beyond this archaic template, the number of characters in the narrative, the number and quality of their constituent qualities (physical, psychological, sociological, cognitive), the static or dynamic development of the character throughout the narrative and the form of characterization are more complex processes that affect the difficulty of the text. The

narrator can develop all the qualities of the character, making the character multi-layered, deep and complex, or create a character with a single dominant quality. In this regard, does the answer to the question about a character with a single dominant quality carry the same cognitive load as the answer to the question about a character with all layers of detail?

The development of a character can be dynamic or static. The ups and downs of the character’s development in the narrative also affect the cognitive load. The transformation of a dynamic character may be interesting to the reader because of its kinetic nature, which may keep attention alive but increases the information load of the reader. A static character, on the other hand, even if it is not interesting to the reader, will cause the reader to make less effort to make sense of it while answering questions about what kind of person it is. Does following these two different types of character development have the same effect on perceived difficulty?

It is clear that there is a need for speculative questions and evaluations about the taxonomic cognitive load of how many characters are involved in the narrative, the differences in making sense of a dynamic or static character, evaluations of a deep character with multiple qualities, and the difficulty created by the form of characterization.

5. 1. *Characterization* is the way the narrator creates a character. Characterization can be explicit or implicit, block explicit/implicit or scattered explicit/implicit. Explicit characterization is when the characteristics of the character are given explicitly by the narrator. The narrator gives direct descriptions, evaluations and definitions of the character. For example, “*he was a tall, blond, quarrelsome boy*” is an open characterization. Implicit characterization, on the other hand, is a form of characterization in which the narrator does not give a direct description or evaluation of the character, but conveys his/her behavior and tastes indirectly. Accordingly, let us look at two short and simple examples of characterization:

- A. “James was a tall, shy, anxious boy. His pale white skin turned red when he was embarrassed.”
- B. “.....James was tall.....
..... shy around his friends
.....
..... worried about being understood correctly
..... his pale white skin turned red when he was embarrassed.”

Absolutely, while it is easier to follow the block characterization (A), to make sense of it, to represent that episode in the mind, following the

scattered characterization (B), adding a new quality to the character in each new episode, requires more cognitive load.

Block and scattered characterization can be done in an explicit or implicit form. If the narrator makes a scattered and implicit characterization, to what extent can it be said that the reader's perceived difficulty in following the character's qualities and forming a mental representation of the character will be the same as the cognitive load required for the reader to follow the block characterization and form a mental representation, regardless of whether it is explicit or implicit? These questions need to be investigated experimentally.

6. *Time*: "Narrative is a doubly temporal sequence: There is the time of the thing told and the time of the narrative -the time of the signified and the time of the signifier-" (Genette, 1983). The time in the narrative chain that shows how long the events take place in a narrative text, that is, how long the plot takes place, "the fictional time occupied by the whole action in the text" (Jahn, 2020), is called story time. In order to determine the discourse time, it is necessary to look at the clues in the text, the tempo and pace of the text.

Discourse time is the time that includes the pauses, slowdowns, accelerations, interventions in the order between events, the prioritization or postponement of the event, and the time, word, line, page in which the narrator conveys an event in story time.

Genette (1983) analyzed time in narrative in terms of order, duration and frequency. Order refers to the sequence of events within the natural time paradigm. In fact, "folk narratives, at least in their most important articulations, conform to chronological order" (Genette, 1983). Therefore, our mental schema has evolved with a linear time scheme in the form of past, present and future according to the order of events in the narrative. But is it always possible to encounter such linearity in a narrative? The order of time in narratives may not be parallel to natural time. Genette (1983) calls this situation anachrony. Let us consider the events in the story section:

1. Thomas' mother died.
2. Thomas met Kate at his mother's funeral.
3. Thomas and Kate got married.
4. Thomas and Kate got divorced.

If the narrator begins the narrative with the wedding ceremony (3), analepsis to the day of his mother's death (1) and includes the thoughts that pass through the characters' minds, then prolepsis to the court corridor (4) and narrates the moment when Thomas meets Kate (2) as they

walk down the corridor, the reader will obviously find it difficult to follow the time. This situation is the most iconic in Proust's novel, and the following passage is remarkable for its anachronies:

"Sometimes passing in front of the hotel he remembered the rainy days when he used to bring his nursemaid that far, on a pilgrim-age. But he remembre them without the melancholy that he then thought he would surely some day savor on feeling that he no longer loved her. For this melancholy, projected in anticipation prior to the indifference that lay ahead, came from his love. And this love existed no more." (Genette, 1983).

"We discover here, in brief, nine sections divided between two temporal positions that we will designate 2 (now) and 1 (once), setting aside their iterative nature ("sometimes"). Section A goes in position 2 ("Sometimes passing in front of the hotel he remembered"), B in position 1 ("the rainy days when he used to bring his nursemaid that far, on a pilgrimage"), C in 2 ("But he remembered them without"), D in 1 ("the melancholy that he then thought"), E in 2 ("he would surely some day savor on feeling that he no longer loved her"), F in 1 ("For this melancholy, projected in anticipation"), G in 2 ("prior to the indifference that lay ahead"), H in 1 ("came from his love"), I in 2 ("And this love existed no more"). The formula of temporal positions, then, is as follows: A2- B1- C2- D1- E2- F1- G2- H1- I2" (Genette, 1983).

The influence of anachronisms on the perceived difficulty of narratives is evident in the formula of this short passage.

In addition to anachronisms, the concept of "*duration*" also affects the difficulty of narrative. According to Genette (1983), duration is the relationship between the actual length of an event (story time) and its representation through language (discourse time). In this case, a narrative can have different ratios of story time and discourse time, which can make the narrative more or less difficult: *Scene*, *summary*, *ellipsis*, *pause*.

Scene is a detailed narration of verbs and dialogues, in which case discourse time and story time are equal: Discourse time=story time.

Summary is the telling of a few days, months or years in a few paragraphs or pages, without elaboration in action or speech. This is expressed as discourse tense<narrative tense.

Ellipsis is a stretch of story time which is not textually represented at all. Such as "5 days later, and James had grown up".

Pause is a period of description without action, a break in narrative time.

If you present a narrative text with many scenes and summaries and few ellipses, they are likely to agree that the text is easy. However, would students' perception of difficulty be the same for a narrative text with many pauses and ellipses, few summaries and almost no scenes?

7. *Space*, “the place or places within which the situations and events represented (setting story space) and the narrating instances occur” (Prince, 2003). Space in a narrative, like the category of time, has two different dimensions: Story-discourse space and narrative space. While story space is the place where all the events in the narrative take place, discourse space is the focus of the narrator’s attention at that moment.

Narrative space is the physical place where the characters in the narrative live. If the narrator, moving away from the narrative space in a story, gives more space to the discourse space in the text, it is possible that the student will have difficulty understanding the text. This is because as the main axis moves away from the discourse level and the new information package is opened up in the mind, the effort of cognitive focus will increase and the difficulty of the text will be linearly affected by this. This will lead to a space that is constructed with forward and backward deviations. Therefore, it will be difficult to follow a space conveyed in this way in the form of fragmented focus.

In addition to the narrative space and the story-discourse space, the number of spaces in a narrative, whether the narrator uses a real space or creates a fictional space, will also affect the difficulty of perceiving the text. While a real place may be relatively easier to comprehend and represent in the mind with both external world knowledge and episodic knowledge, can a fictional place - Hogwarts, Combray come to mind - be the same in terms of cognitive load? Because a real space is natural in terms of signs, it is not in a gap, but a non-real space is in a gap in terms of signs until it is materialized in the mind. On the other hand, a mixed space can also be designed, in which case what happens to the cognitive load?

Conclusion

This study, prepared as a theoretical discussion, tries to explain that the number and type of stories in a narrative, discourse forms, narrative levels, focus types, number and qualities of characters and characterization style, duration in the time category, prolepsis and analepsis, whether the space is real or fictional, and the cognitive load created by the way the narrator creates the space can affect the perception of the narrative as difficult.

The fact that *Homo sapiens*, who cognitively develops and evolves through narrative reasoning and needs narratives, does not use this evolutionarily acquired ability to determine the difficulty of narrative texts can be interpreted as an alienation from its own system of thought. Traditional readability formulas can not give consistent and meaningful

results regarding the difficulty of narrative texts without taking into account the criterion of the type of text and the structural elements of the narrative; however, the analysis of texts with some superficial statistical data has become a more interesting subject in the literature. In order to solve this problem, the cognitive processes of the structural elements of the narrative that affect the difficulty of the narrative texts - some neurological assessment tools should be considered, for example, EEG - need to be deciphered in depth. In this way, it is not far-fetched to develop an artificial intelligence model. The critical and analytical evaluation by researchers of each of the factors presented in this study will contribute to the emergence of a more holistic approach to text difficulty.

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