



Teacher Language Complexity

1.5-2

Grades Above Their Students' Grade Level

Teachers tend to speak 1.5 - 2 grades above their students' grade level. Your Sibme AI Report offers three measures for analyzing Teacher Language Complexity.

Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level:

A mathematical formula that takes into account the **average sentence length** and the **average number of syllables** per word.

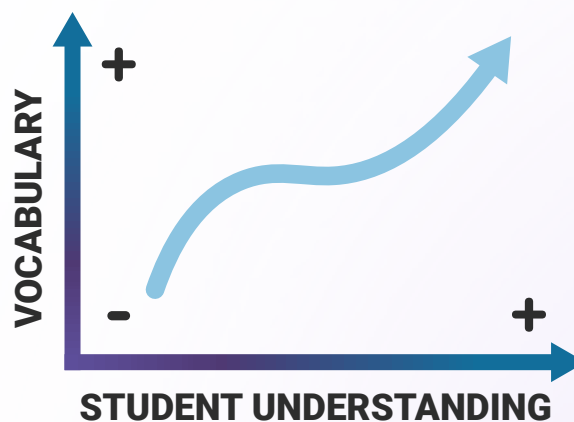
SMOG Index Grade Level (*Simple Measure of Gobbledygook*):

Calculates the readability based on the **number of polysyllabic words** in a passage.

Dale-Chall Readability Score:

Incorporates a list of 3,000 **familiar words** and measures how often **unfamiliar words** are used to calculate readability.

[Research](#) highlights the significant role teacher language plays in student learning. As students are learning new concepts, using a basic vocabulary allows for more attention to be paid to new concepts. However, as students grasp new concepts, instructional language should be enriched to deepen student learning.



Cognitive Load & Comprehension:

Students learn best when the teacher's language is not too complex and not too simple.

English Language Learners (ELLs) & Special Populations:

Intentional use of language complexity supports diverse learners, ensuring equity in access to learning.

Scaffolding Learning:

For younger students or those learning new concepts, clear and accessible language ensures foundational understanding before introducing more complex vocabulary and sentence structures.

Academic Language Development:

As students master concepts, exposure to more sophisticated language helps them develop critical thinking and disciplinary literacy.



Which Measure Should I Choose?

While some educators will benefit from using all three measures together to get a well-rounded view of their language complexity, each measure has unique applications.

Flesch-Kincaid

If you want to analyze whether your sentence length and word complexity made the lesson easier or harder for students to follow.

Does not account for vocabulary.

SMOG Index

If you want to ensure your speech aligns with a specific grade level and is appropriate for their understanding.

More sensitive to challenging, academic language that emerges in middle school.

Dale-Chall

If you want to assess whether the number of unfamiliar words in your lesson impacted comprehension.

Designed for 4th grade and above. [Click here to see a conversion table.](#)

Strategies to Adjust Language Complexity:

- Eliminating filler words (Um, Like, Ah,) and simply replacing them with silence has a powerful effect.
- Articulation matters. Unclear speech can impact a student's understanding and reduce their engagement in the lesson.
- Replace difficult words with simpler synonyms and/or explicitly define key academic terms when necessary.
- Dual coding theory (Paivio, 1986) suggests that students retain information better when text is paired with visuals; so consider adding anchor charts, graphic organizers or gestures to reinforce understanding.
- Pace also matters, see the [Teacher Words Per Minute](#) companion resource for more information.
- Record additional lessons and refer to the Sibme AI Report: Teacher Language Complexity chart to continue exploring how speech impacts student learning.



When reflecting on the impact of the complexity of teacher language, consider the following questions:

1. Is the complexity of the speech appropriate for the concepts being taught and the developmental level of students?
2. Does the teacher speech consider the diverse linguistic backgrounds of students?
3. Consider also the [Teacher Words Per Minute report](#). How is comprehension impacted by both the grade level and rate of teacher speech?

Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level:

- Were explanations clear, or did long sentences make key ideas harder to grasp?
- Were complex ideas effectively simplified, or did students seem confused?

SMOG Index Grade Level:

- Did students struggle with the vocabulary used, or did they engage with it confidently?
- How could academic language remain balanced while keeping speech accessible?

Dale-Chall Readability Score:

- Was there too much jargon or technical language without explanation?
- Were students able to follow the lesson, or did unfamiliar words create barriers?
- Are there certain terms that should have been pre-taught or introduced with visual supports?

Remember:

Simplifying teacher language doesn't mean **lowering rigor**—it means making content more **accessible, engaging, and effective** for all learners. By using clear, concise, and intentional language, teachers can **enhance comprehension, reduce cognitive overload, and improve student engagement**.

Remember that while AI can provide valuable insights and support, it should not replace the expertise and judgment of educators. The AI report should be viewed as a tool to augment and inform instructional decision-making rather than as a substitute for human analysis and understanding.

**FIND ADDITIONAL
AI COMPANION RESOURCES**